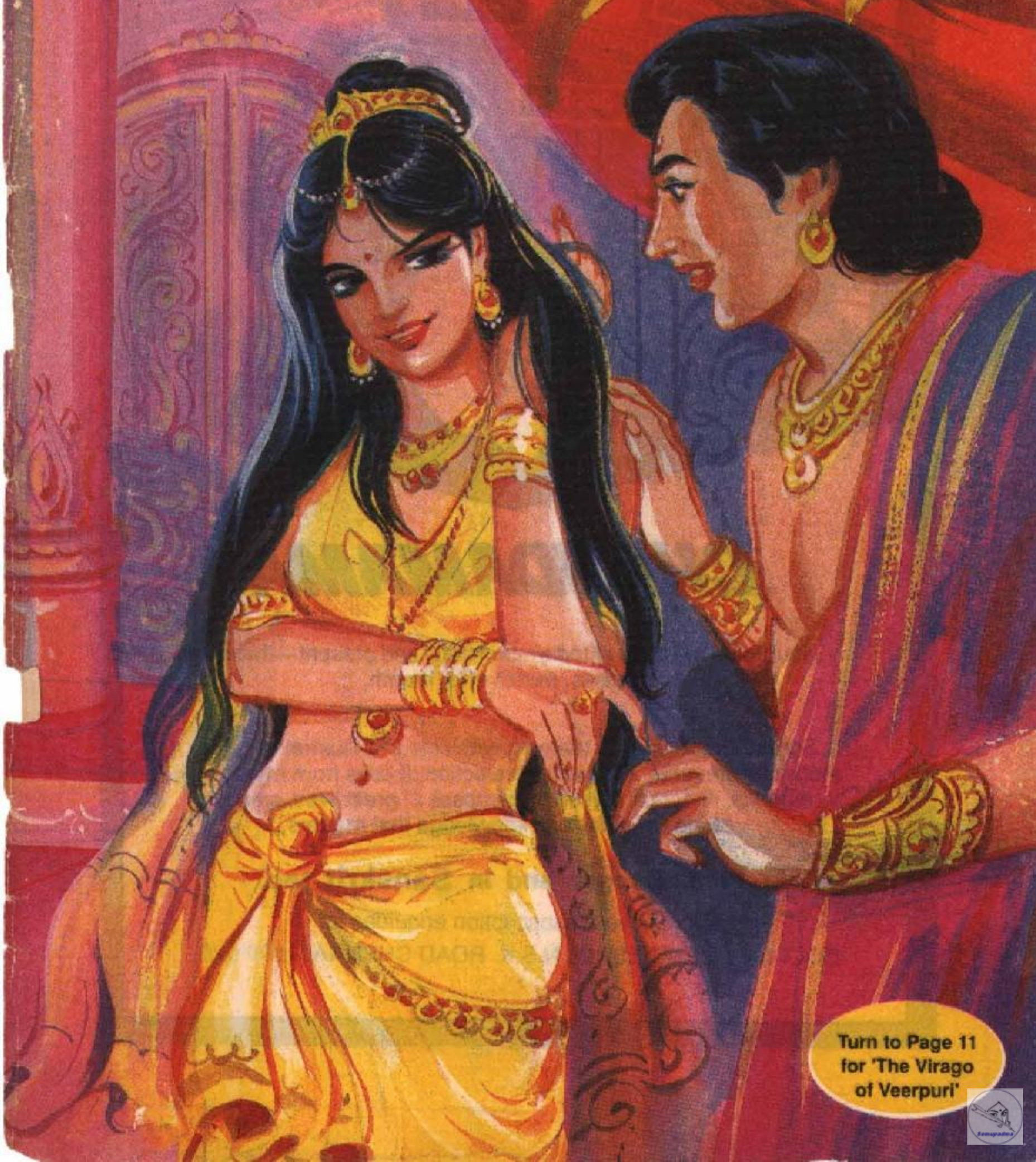


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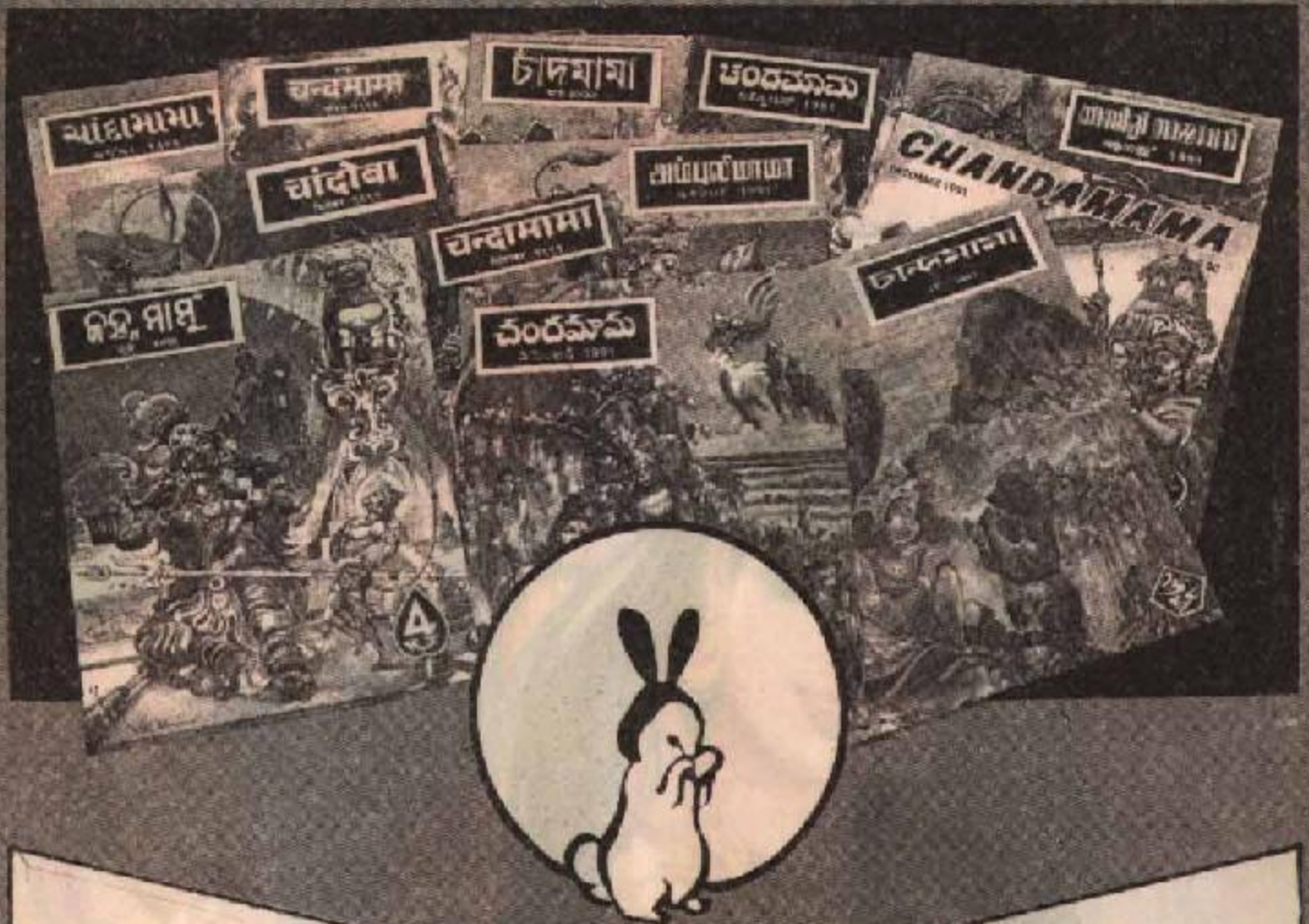
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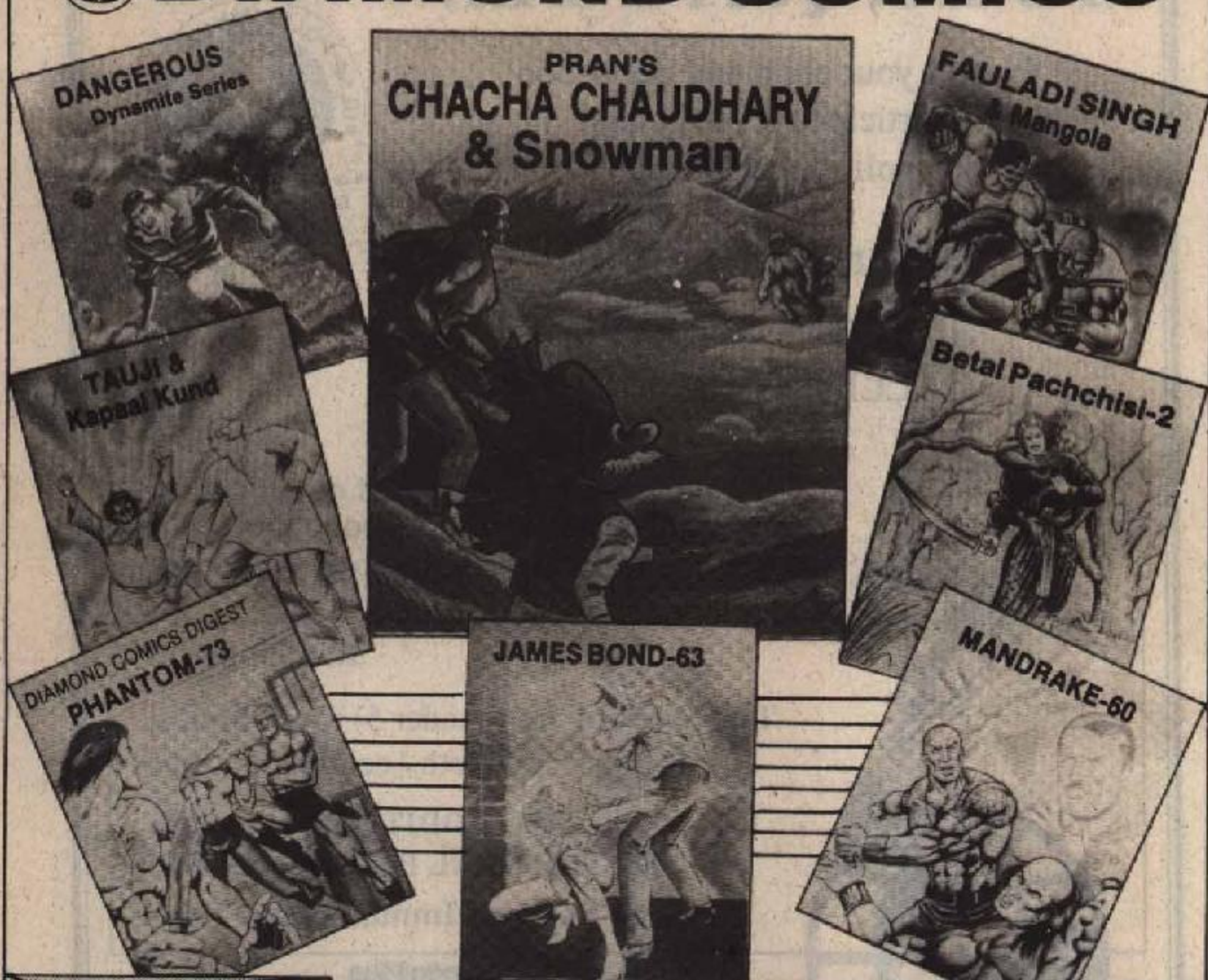
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NEXT ISSUE

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THE VIRAGO OF VEERPURI : Raja of Mahendragiri has avenged the injustice and insult meted out to the royalty by Veerpuri, where the Commander of the Army, Marthandvarma, first, and Queen Suryaprabha, later, die under mysterious circumstances. They are brother and sister. Princess Vairamukhi, whom Raja manipulates as his instrument to carry out his nefarious acts of revenge, is now instructed to direct her moves against Prince Veersen. All this is managed by Raja while remaining in Mahendragiri. He is able to pass messages to the princess with the help of the wizardry he practises. Prince Veersen, who is not aware of these machinations, moves closer to Vairamukhi, whom he finds a likeable companion. Does he think of a marriage alliance between Veerpuri and Mahendragiri?

MAHABHARATA : The Pandava armies are now ready for the final war. The Kaurava leader, Duryodhana, requests Bhishma to take over as the supreme commander of the Kaurava army. He agrees, but on one condition. He will not fight by the side of Karna whom he believes to be lowly born. Karna is irked, and Duryodhana finds it difficult to avoid a dissension in the Kaurava side. Bhishma explains why he cannot fight Sikhandi face to face. He was once a woman, whom he had abducted but refused to marry, because he had taken a vow not to get married. Duryodhana realises that a victory in the war is doubtful. What are his plans?

THEY STOOD UP TO THE BRITISH : The series in comics form takes up yet another of the pre-1857 rebellion which shakes the foundations of the British empire.

THE RIVERS OF INDIA : The series 'Coastal Journeys' now gives place to journeys along the banks of the famous rivers, which abound in legends. Leading the series is Kaveri.

PLUS all the regular features.

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Founder: CHAKRAPANI
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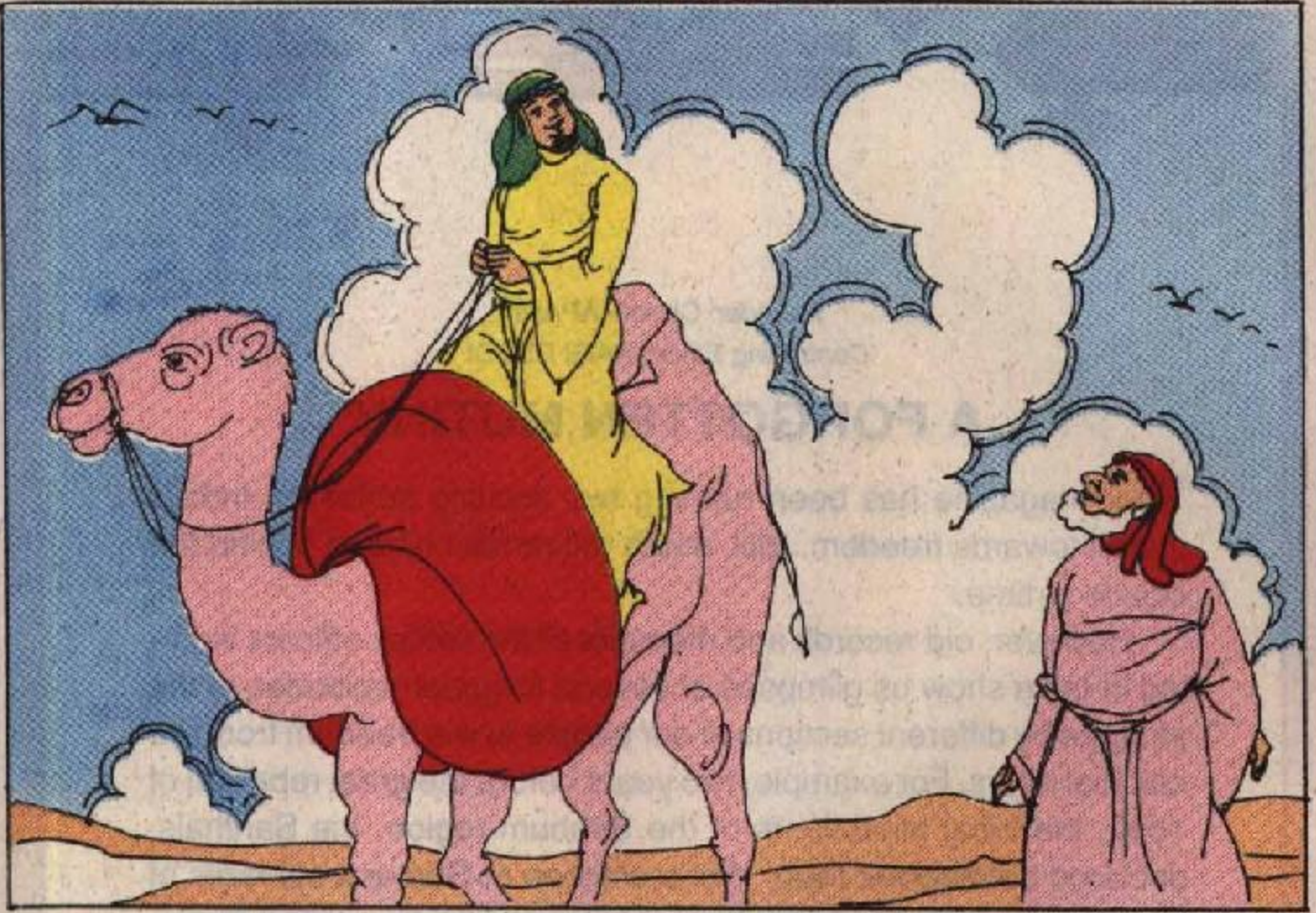
A FORGOTTEN MUTINY

Your magazine has been running two exciting series on India's march towards freedom. Still, much will remain hidden behind the clouds of time.

However, old records and memoirs of the British officers working in India show us glimpses of several forgotten episodes of the struggle by different sections of our people to win freedom from the colonial rulers. For example, two years before the great rebellion of 1857, the tribal inhabitants of the Birbhum region, the Santhals, declared themselves free! "We're children of God and servants of none!" they said. They had been oppressed and exploited mercilessly by the English East India Company, which tried to take away even the last pie they earned through their hard toil.

The Company men made fifty elephants drunk and let them loose on the Santhal hamlets. The elephants trampled upon hundreds of men, women, and children to death. Next, when thousands of them, armed with bows and arrows, marched forward to face the Company, they were attacked with guns and cannons. But they would not retreat. They stood like a wall, till the last man dropped dead!

HOW THE TWO TRAVELLERS GREW WISER



Once a villager-trader was going to the market in the town. Loading the camel with two large sacks, he himself took his seat on top of them. Halfway he crossed a man walking in the same direction. They greeted each other courteously.

"What are you carrying in those big bags?" enquired the old stranger.

"One of my sacks contains rice and the other sand!" promptly replied the trader.

"But tell me friend, why have you loaded the poor animal with sand?" asked the other.

"It's simple! I have done so in order to distribute the weight equally on both sides of the camel," explained the trader.

"I see! Now, why don't you just throw out the sand and then fill the empty sack with half the quantity of rice from the other bag?" suggested the stranger.

"Then what will happen?" asked the surprised villager.

"Nothing spectacular! Only the sacks will be light and your poor camel will get some relief!" replied the old man.

"O God! Why didn't that occur to me earlier? Verily, you must be a wise and worthy sage!" exclaimed the trader, overwhelmed by the simple suggestion. Indeed, so very impressed was he that he even offered the stranger a seat on his camel, after throwing the sand away. They both continued towards the same destination.

After a while the trader asked his friend in earnest, "Dear Sir, with a mind so sharp and brilliant, you must surely be a prince or a king in disguise!"

"I'm neither, but just a common man. Doesn't my attire say so?" answered the other with a chuckle.

"Then you must surely be possessing a string of camels and a stud of horses?" enquired the trader.

"None, dear friend, none!"

"All right then! But how many cows and sheep have you got?" hopefully asked the villager.

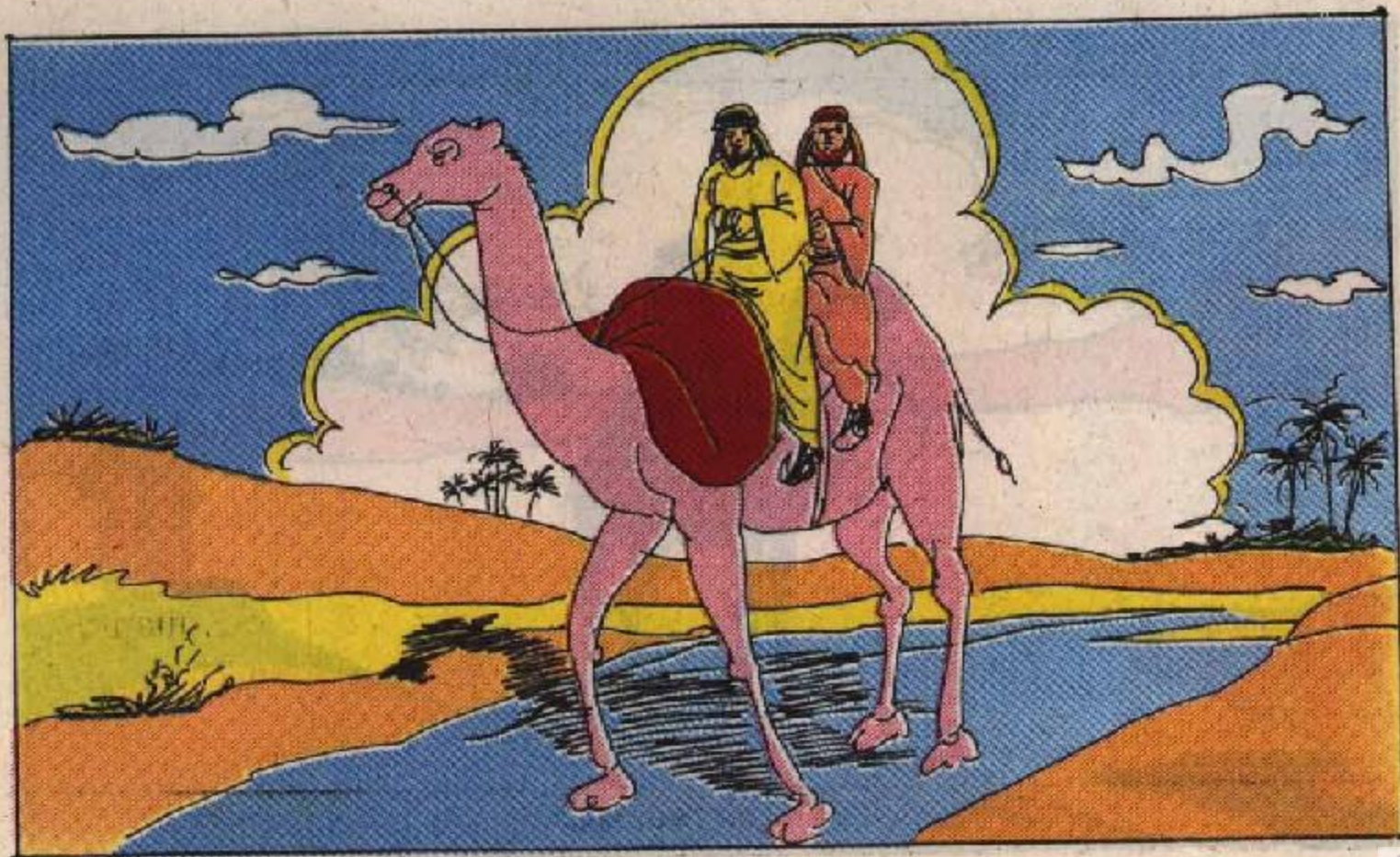
"Not even one!" was the reply.

"Then, your coffers must be filled with wealth!" asked the trader insistently.

"Not even a single coin! Nor do I have anything on me now to pay for a full square meal!" calmly answered the traveller.

The trader was utterly bewildered and bothered at the same time.

"What? With such a brilliant mind,



you are a pauper, possessing nothing at all! But don't you look happy and carefree?" exclaimed the trader, astonished.

"I've nothing, not even a shelter over my head. Yet, it is true that I always do feel very contented," replied his companion.

"Well, dear friend, if with all your wisdom and talent you possess nothing at all, would you tell me from where you draw your happiness?" asked the villager.

"My friend, things like wealth, mansion, horses, are only a temporary means of happiness. True joy and peace flow from within," replied the old man with a smile.

The villager suddenly stopped.

"I cannot take you any further," he said gravely. "Get off my

beast!"

"Why can't you?" Now it was his companion's turn to feel surprised.

"Lest your misfortune befalls me. If you are going forward, I will go back. It is better to have one sackful of rice and the other full of sand than have a mind full of wisdom and have nothing at all!" hurriedly spoke the trader and, as soon as his companion dismounted, hastened homewards.

The traveller stood in silence for a while and told himself, 'Indeed, there will never be an end to learning more and more about human nature!'

And the villager, too, was feeling no less wiser, for he had discovered the hollowness of wisdom!

— Retold by Anup Kishore Das



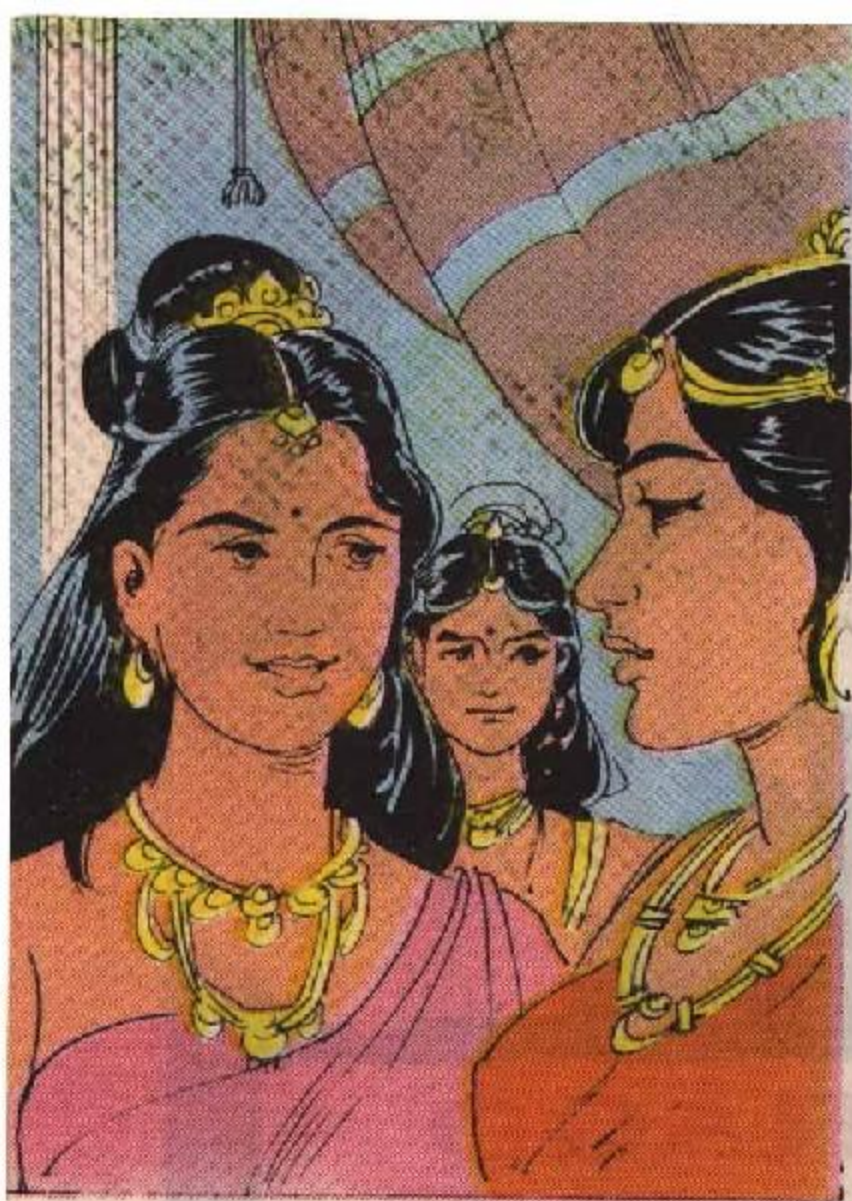


THE VIRAGO OF VEERPURI.

The story so far: Princess Vairamukhi, who comes under the spell of 'Raja' of Mahendragiri, a wizard of sorts, is not aware that she was instrumental in the death of her own father, Marthandvarma, the Army Commander of Veerpuri. The wizardry of Raja has resulted in a metamorphosis for the Commander's daughter, Vajreshwari. Raja is on a revenge spree and he is using Vajreshwari (now Vairamukhi) who happened to stray into Mahendragiri. In Veerpuri, she is received by Queen Suryaprabha with great affection, but is unmoved when Raja instructs her to isolate the queen from everyone, including Prince Veersan. She is expected to befriend him and see that he is kept away from the palace so that Raja's men can gain entry into the queen's chambers. King Soorasen, too, is away. What fate awaits Queen Suryaprabha?

"Wait for instructions! Not today, may be tomorrow!" That was what Princess Vairamukhi heard from Raja who, the princess guessed, was in Mahendragiri, and not anywhere in Veerpuri where he had sent her to accomplish a certain mission on his behalf.

That afternoon she had had her first meeting with Prince Veersan who was away from the kingdom when she had arrived in Veerpuri. Queen Suryaprabha herself had accompanied her son when they called on the princess. At the brief meeting, the two did not have any opportunity to



exchange even a few words.

So, Princess Vairamukhi was more than taken by surprise when Raja had prefaced his 'message' with a reference to her meeting with the prince. She was dumbstruck. And then came the ominous part of the message: "You must make use of him to your advantage!"

'What did he mean by that?' wondered Vairamukhi. How did he come to know of their meeting so soon? She concluded that he must have some mysterious powers and she should not try to probe about them, but only carry out his instructions.

The next morning, Queen Suryaprabha sent word to the princess that she would not be making the

usual visit to the temple of Bhuvaneshwari, as King Soorasen was away from the capital and Prince Veersen had returned to the kingdom only the previous day and she wished to spend some time with him. The queen had made it a practice to worship at the temple every morning along with Princess Vairamukhi. But that day she decided not to stir out.

The princess told the queen's maids that she did not wish to go without Suryaprabha and she would only go to the Kali temple as usual in the evening. During the day, the queen and princess did not meet at all. When evening came, the princess, accompanied by Ragini and escorted by the queen's maids, went to the temple. She hurried through her worship, and hastened to the banyan tree to await Raja's instructions.

That evening, the princess appeared quite excited as she spent the twilight hours alone beneath the tree. She was glad that Ragini and the maids were taking a stroll away from her.

Suddenly Raja's voice cracked from nowhere: "Listen carefully, Vairamukhi," he began. "The king is not in the capital. He'll return only after two days. My men are already in Veerpuri and will keep a watch for a signal from you. Your role is to keep the prince away from his mother. You will not be held responsible if anything happens to the queen. Even the

prince will not suspect you. So also the people of Veerpuri. But remember! Everything that will happen from now on will be in your hands. Any wrong step on your part, and my mission will not fructify. So, be watchful. I shall next speak to you only after the 'deed' is done!"

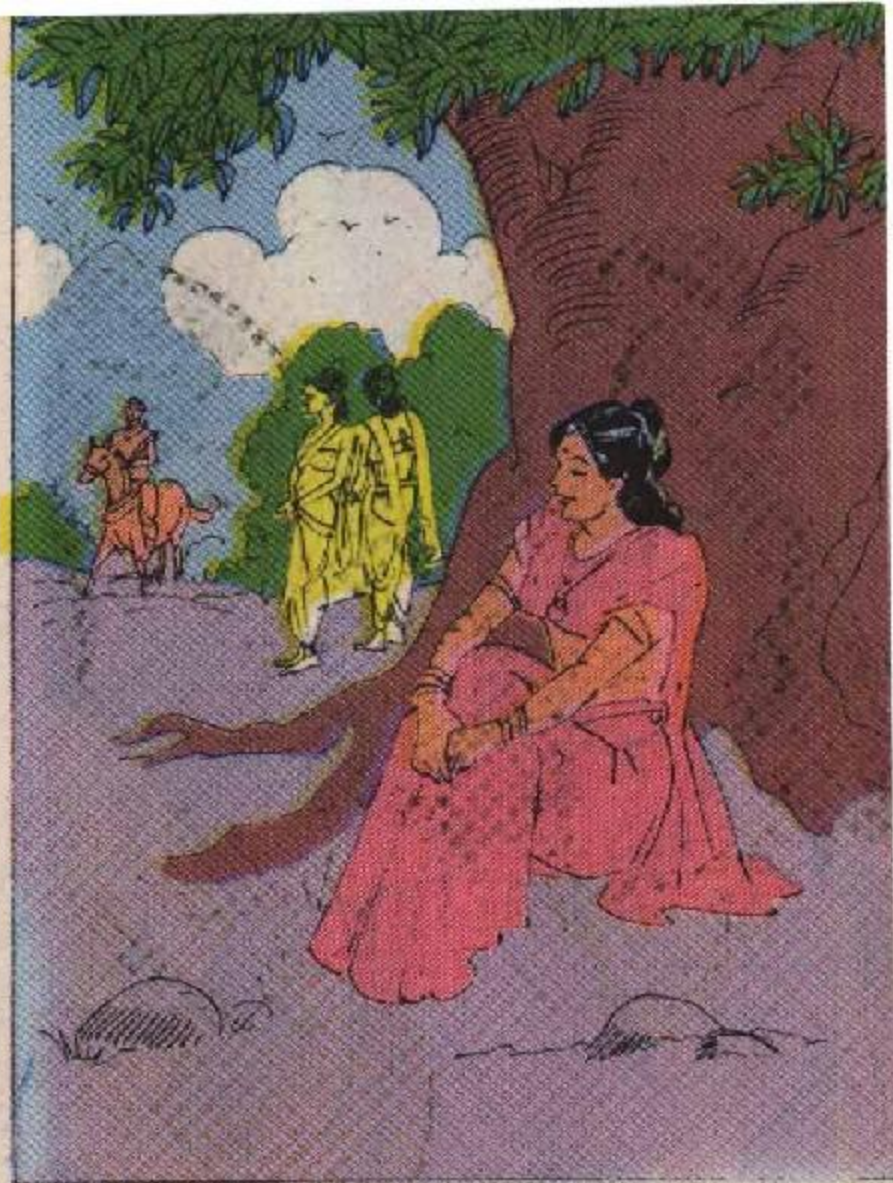
Princess Vairamukhi waited for some time to make sure that Raja had concluded his message. She was about to get up when she saw a rider on horseback almost heading towards her. When he came closer, she saw him. It was Prince Veersen. He dismounted and approached the princess.

"My mother told me you would be here, Princess Vairamukhi" said Veersen. "As my father, the King, is away, the Prime Minister had come over, and I was closeted with him throughout the day. That's why I couldn't call on you earlier," he added apologetically. "I hope you aren't in a hurry to go back to the palace."

"No, not at all, prince!" responded Vairamukhi, coyly.

"I shall take you back myself," Veersen said, after contemplating for a moment. "You may ask the maids to return and not wait for you."

Ragini and the queen's maids had already seen the prince accosting the princess and were slowly approaching her, wondering whether she would want them to stay back and escort her to the palace as it would soon be dark. They were at their ease when



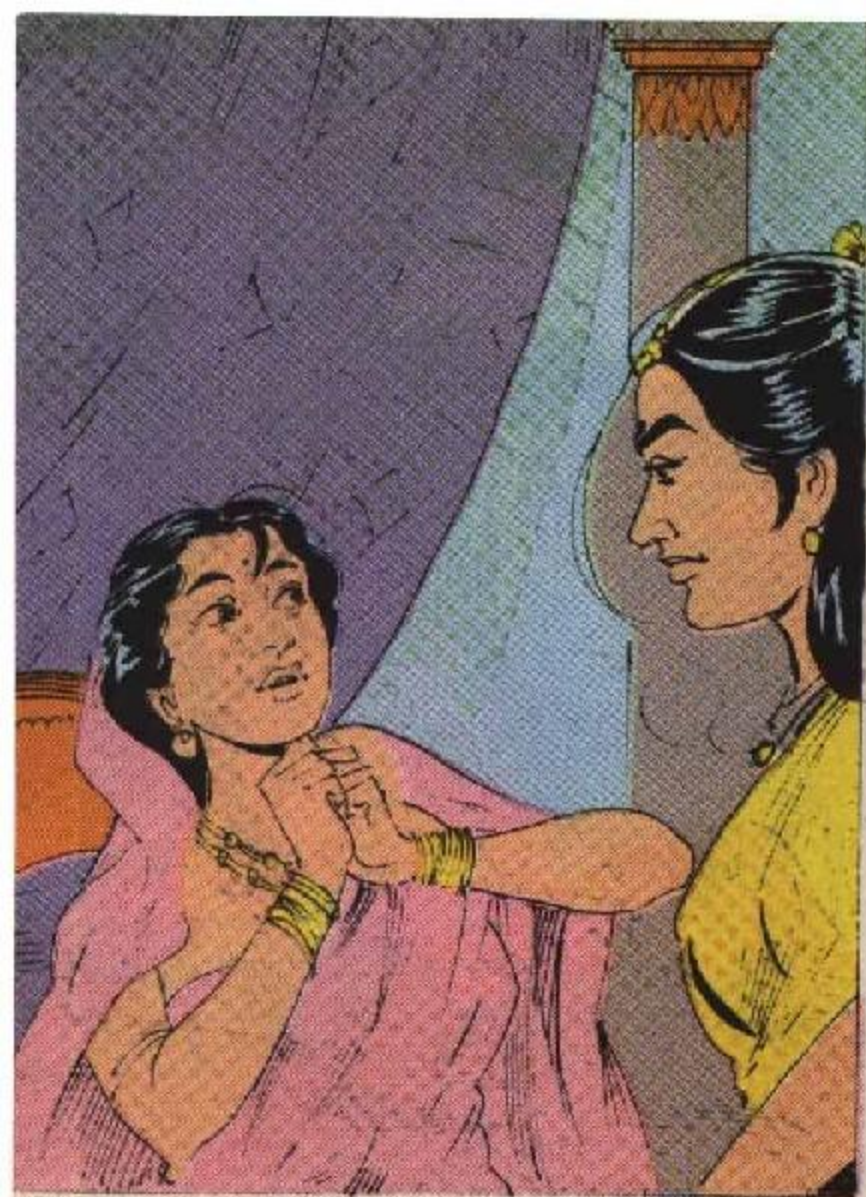
Vairamukhi said: "The prince will take me back; so, you needn't wait for me. All of you may return to the palace and inform the queen."

After the three girls were out of sight, Veersen and Vairamukhi sat beneath the huge banyan tree and entered into an excited conversation. The princess evaded all queries from the prince about her parentage and cleverly drew him into telling her all about his visits to Saptagiri and Senapuri.

"I wish I had known about your coming to Veerpuri," said Veersen. "Then I would have remained here to welcome you, princess!"

"I had for long been wanting to worship at the temples of





Bhuvaneshwari and Kali, and on my arrival here, the queen was kind enough to invite me to stay with her in the palace. I had no knowledge of either your presence in or absence from Veerpuri," said Vairamukhi by way of explanation.

The two remained there talking for a long time, when Veersen recounted how his uncle, the Army Chief Marthandvarma, had met with a sudden end and he had to keep company with Vijaykrishna on his visits to his other uncles. Suddenly he realised that it was quite dark and they should be returning to the palace. He helped the Princess to get on to the horse, and she sat behind, holding him with one hand.

Vairamukhi wondered whether the long absence of the prince from the palace had been made good use of by Raja's men to enter the queen's chambers. The prince left her in front of her private apartments and proceeded to his own. Ragini received her and attended to her needs. "Did the queen enquire about me?" she asked of Ragini.

"No, princess," replied the maid. "She must have known that you were with the prince and that he would bring you back here."

Vairamukhi deliberately desisted from making more queries. She went to bed at the usual time, though sleep would not come to her for a long time. She thought that the palace was uncannily quiet, and the silence became unbearable to her after some time. She got up from her bed, and went over to the next room where Ragini was fast asleep. She knew the way to the queen's chambers and proceeded there slowly and cautiously. She thought she would ask Suryaprabha, if she had not already retired, whether she would be visiting the temple the next morning. The queen's maids, too, were sound asleep, and so Vairamukhi ventured to peep into the queen's room. In a trice she knew that Raja's men had already been there and had gone away after accomplishing their mission.

Queen Suryaprabha was struggling for her breath. She looked at the prin-

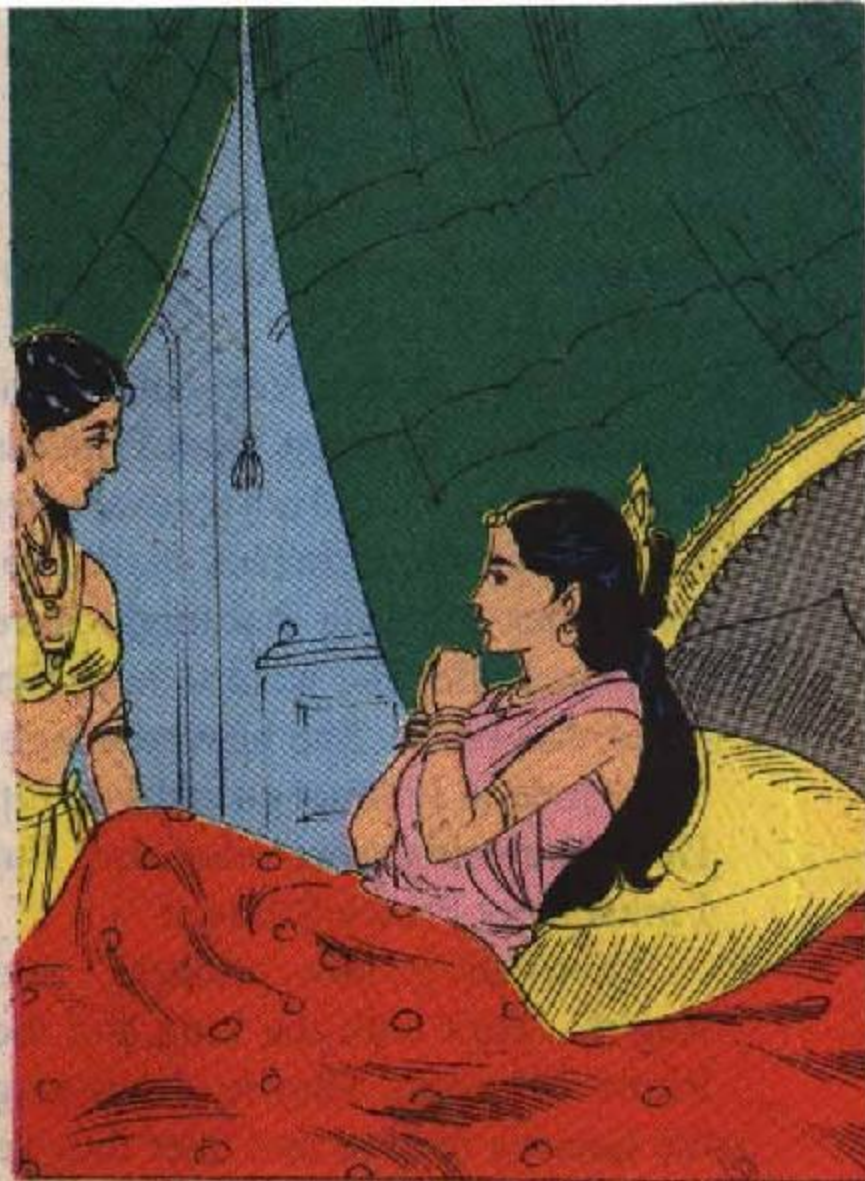
cess. "Who... are... you?" she stammered. "You... are... Vajreshwari! But... she... is... dead, she... is... no... more... You... are... her... ghost! You... have... come... to... kill... me? No... I... did... not... kill... your... father... my... brother... save... me... if... you... can!"

"Who is Vajreshwari? Who was her father? Who killed him?" These questions pounded in Vairamukhi's mind. She could not understand what the queen was trying to tell her. And how could *she* save her? Suddenly, she found herself screaming. "No! I'm not here to kill you, Queen Suryaprabha! But you deserve punishment for having cheated Pratapchandra. You forsook him because he suffered a physical deformity! Your brother was punished because he tried to poison Vinaychandra. The next to go will be..."

By now Vairamukhi was tearing at her hair with both hands; her eyes were a glowing red with revenge, but she did not go anywhere near the queen, who now lay motionless. The princess traced her way back to her room and quietly slid into her bed. In no time, she was fast asleep.

"Princess! Princess Vairamukhi!" Ragini shook her out of sleep. "The queen... is no more!"

"What! What did you say, Ragini?" Vairamukhi sat up in her bed, rubbing out sleep from her eyes. "Queen



Suryaprabha dead? How?"

"She died in her sleep!" said Ragini. "The king suddenly returned and found her dead in her chambers. Nobody knows when she had died, and how. The last one to see her was the prince, soon after you both returned to the palace. Her maids did not hear her call or any sounds from her room. Strangely her eyelids were open, as if she had seen something fearful just before she died! Was there any threat to her life? She died when the king was away. Did he have a premonition and decide to return soon? Everyone is asking these questions and does not have any answers. What a sad thing to happen! The queen was a pious woman. She



was affectionate to everybody. I thought she was adoring you, princess!"

"Where's Prince Veersen?" That was the only response from Princess Vairamukhi. She did not try to answer Ragini's questions. In fact, she did not remember anything that might have happened after she went to bed. Her mind was blank. She heaved a sigh. "That means, I cannot go and worship Devi Bhuvaneshwari today also! But I must meet Prince Veersen."

"You can't go now, princess," said Ragini. "He's with the king and the Prime Minister. They're discussing the queen's funeral and later they've to meet the people who have crowded at the gates of the palace. The queen's maids will tell us when you could meet the prince."

Their meeting late in the evening was very formal. Earlier, Princess Vairamukhi was led to the courtyard in the palace where the queen's body lay in state before it was taken away for cremation. She only saw the prince from a distance.

When she was later ushered into his room in the evening, she found him thoroughly shaken because of the sudden tragedy, but maintaining his composure. He merely said: "I should not have left her alone yesterday when the king was also away. I met her soon after we had returned to the palace and I found her hale and hearty. She was happy that we met each other and had a long conversation. She was very fond of you, princess."

"I used to look forward to my



visits to the temples in the queen's company," Vairamukhi responded. "Yes I, too, thought she had taken a special liking for me. It's very sad that she has been removed from our midst so soon!"

"Her absence should not be taken amiss, princess," said Veersen, "and it should not prompt you to leave Veerpuri. Stay as long as you like, and tell me when you wish to return to Mahendragiri, and I shall arrange proper escort for you. But I do hope you will remain here for some more days. You may start going to the temples after the royal maids come out of their mourning." He stood up to indicate that their meeting was over, for the time being.

Vairamukhi had to wait for five days before the palace arranged for her usual visits to the temples in the morning and evening. Would there be any message from Raja? she wondered, when she came out of the Kali temple and walked over to the ban-

yan tree. There was, as soon as she took her seat and Ragini and the palace maids had started their private session.

"It was touch and go, princess!" the voice said. "My men were about to enter the queen's chamber when the prince came in. But he did not stay long and they could complete their task. You performed your role to perfection, princess. Now, you must get ready for a still bigger role. Your next victim will be Prince Veersen himself. The day is not far when he'll come to you with a proposal for marriage. If Vajreshwari had been alive, he might have married her. Princess Vairamukhi will not be *his* bride, but..."

Was Raja referring to her? The princess was surprised. Her surprise turned to suspense as the voice trailed off. Raja did not complete his sentence. If she would not be the prince's bride, who else would she be?

— To continue



NEWS FLASH

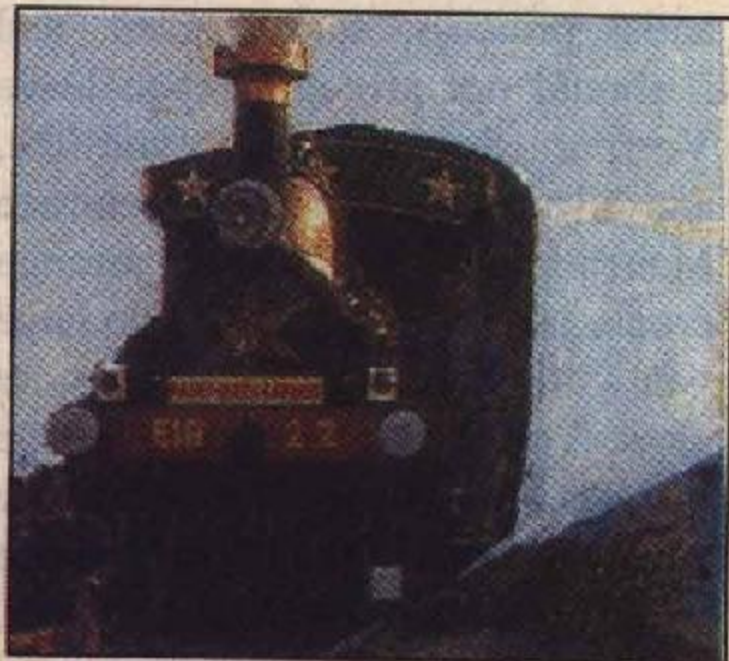
Longest toy

Mention toy, and what easily comes to one's mind is a toy gun or a motor car, or a railway system run by the remote control. And if it is a stuffed toy, it could be an elephant, tiger, bear, or a monkey. Now, Singapore has made the longest toy - a Chinese dragon - which is longer than the 419 metre stuffed snake assembled by students in Norway in 1994—a world record. The dragon was made at the instance of Singapore Airlines to raise funds for the welfare of disabled persons. Singapore has the distinction of holding another unique world record—the longest "chain" made of paper (gem) clips!

Oldest rail engine "chugs" again

When it was commissioned in India 95 years ago, the rail engine was named "Fairy Queen". After it was taken off the rails, it became one of the beauties at the National Railway Museum in New Delhi. But the Ministry of Railways, not long ago, thought that it could be put on rails once again to bring in some foreign exchange. How was this made possible? First, the engine was given a cosmetic overhaul, when it acquired a shining look. Then, two coaches (this oldest engine can haul only two) were got ready, one for 60 passengers and the other for housing a pantry and keeping a stock of coal. From last October, Fairy Queen started its luxury journeys between Delhi and Alwar in Rajasthan, once a week for five months, when it will rest till the next tourist season starts. Passengers have to pay 400 U.S. dollars (nearly Rs.15,000) for a to-and-fro journey, which one way takes six hours. The tourists are taken to

the Sariska Wild Life Sanctuary, and brought back to the Queen the next day for its return journey. The legendary engine was made by a British firm, which does not exist now. This world's oldest steam engine, however, expects to enjoy a longer life.

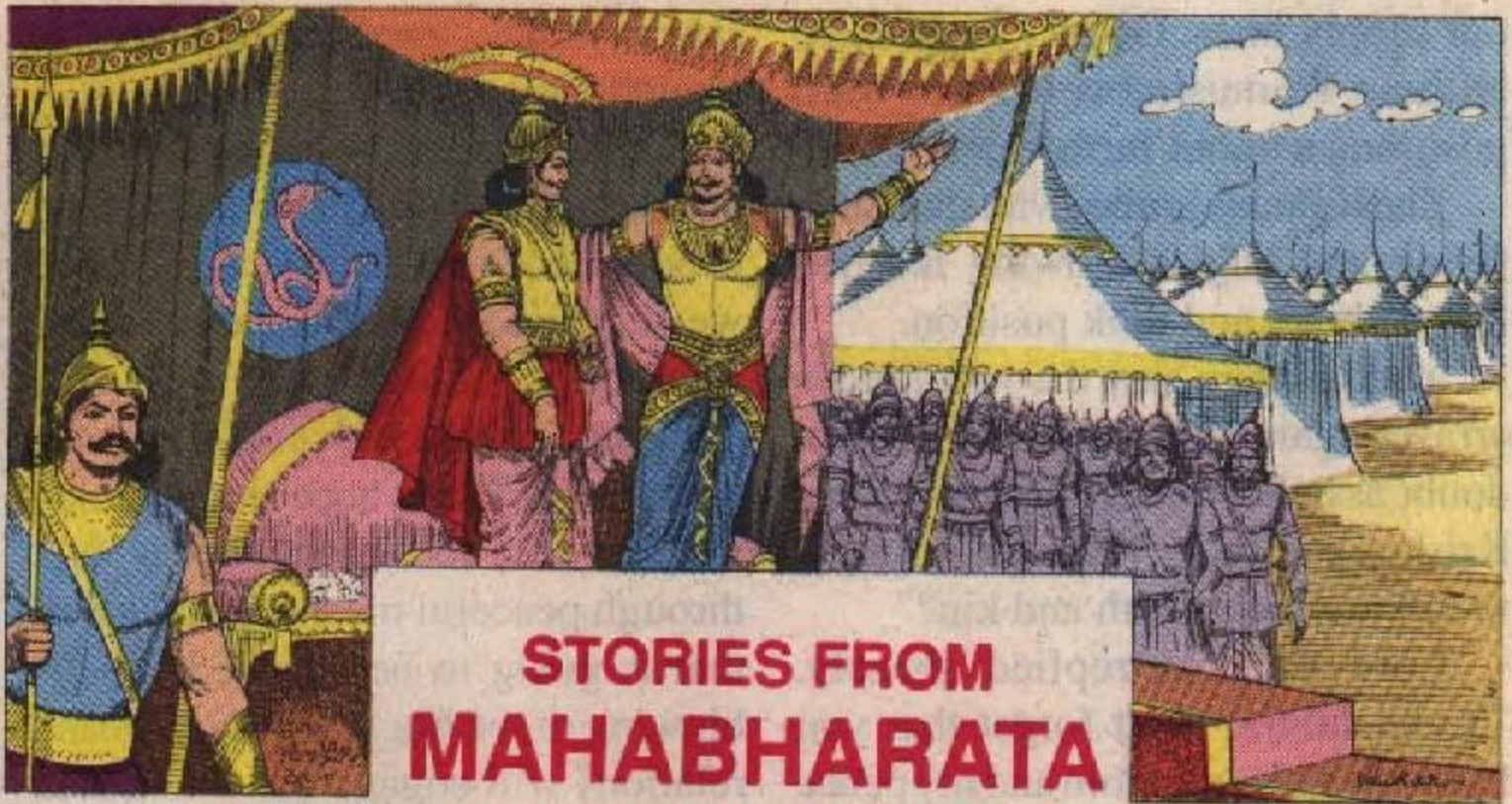


Fourth century B.C. map

A map made on a copper plate was unearthed some 30 years ago from a place in China where an imperial mausoleum was once located. However, it was only recently that archaeologists discovered, it was as old as 340 B.C. Found in Pingshan county of Hebei province, this 2,300-year-old map—believed to be the oldest—has clear markings with near accurate distances. Only the latitude and longitude demarcations are missing.

Record price for tea

A cup of tea is often hailed as 'the cup that cheers'. Any ordinary variety of tea is normally sold for anything between Rs.100 - 150 a kilo. Recently, a superior brand was put to auction in Calcutta, which was taken for Rs.2,700 a kilo. That was a record. This tea came from an estate in Darjeeling, and there was 126 kilos of it for auction. What will the cheer be like if one were to be offered a cup of tea made of that brand?



STORIES FROM MAHABHARATA

The story so far: When Dhritarashtra said that he had no desire to see anything more once he had seen the cosmic figure of Lord Krishna, the vision vanished. Then the Lord drove to Kunti's palace to bid farewell to her. She asserted that the Pandavas must regain their territories through force. Kunti and Lord Krishna tried to woo Karna to the side of the Pandavas, but Karna said he would not desert Duryodhana even if he was given the entire world as a price. However, he promised Kunti that he would spare all the Pandavas except Arjuna, whom he had sworn to kill. A sea of Pandava army raced towards Kurukshetra for the final battle.

The Pandava armies pitched their tents at Kurukshetra. The various kings could be identified by the flags that flew from their tent poles.

Lord Krishna and Arjuna were quite familiar with the battle ground. Dhrishtadyumna, Sathyaki and Yuyudhana had chosen their part of the ground well where they quartered their troops.

The Pandavas had camped on the banks of the river Iravati and around their tents, a circular moat had been dug up.

Physicians and artisans were busy

with their chores, and Yudhishtira went round the campsite to make sure that everything was ready for the momentous event.

Meanwhile, in Hastinapura, Duryodhana called his confidants, Karna and Sakuni, and said: "Krishna is deliberately foisting a war on us. He is the chief guide of the Pandavas. We must be on our guard, and build up our fighting strength. We must send our troops to Kurukshetra well in advance. We must have excellent arrangements. We must guard against enemy forays attempting to cut off



our supply lines. Go and prepare for all these. We must move to the forward positions without further delay."

The Kaurava armies with standards flying and bugles blowing reached Kurukshetra and took position.

Yudhishtira saw the vast hordes arrayed against him, and for a moment doubt assailed him. He went to Lord Krishna and said, "Krishna, is it right to kill one's own kith and kin?"

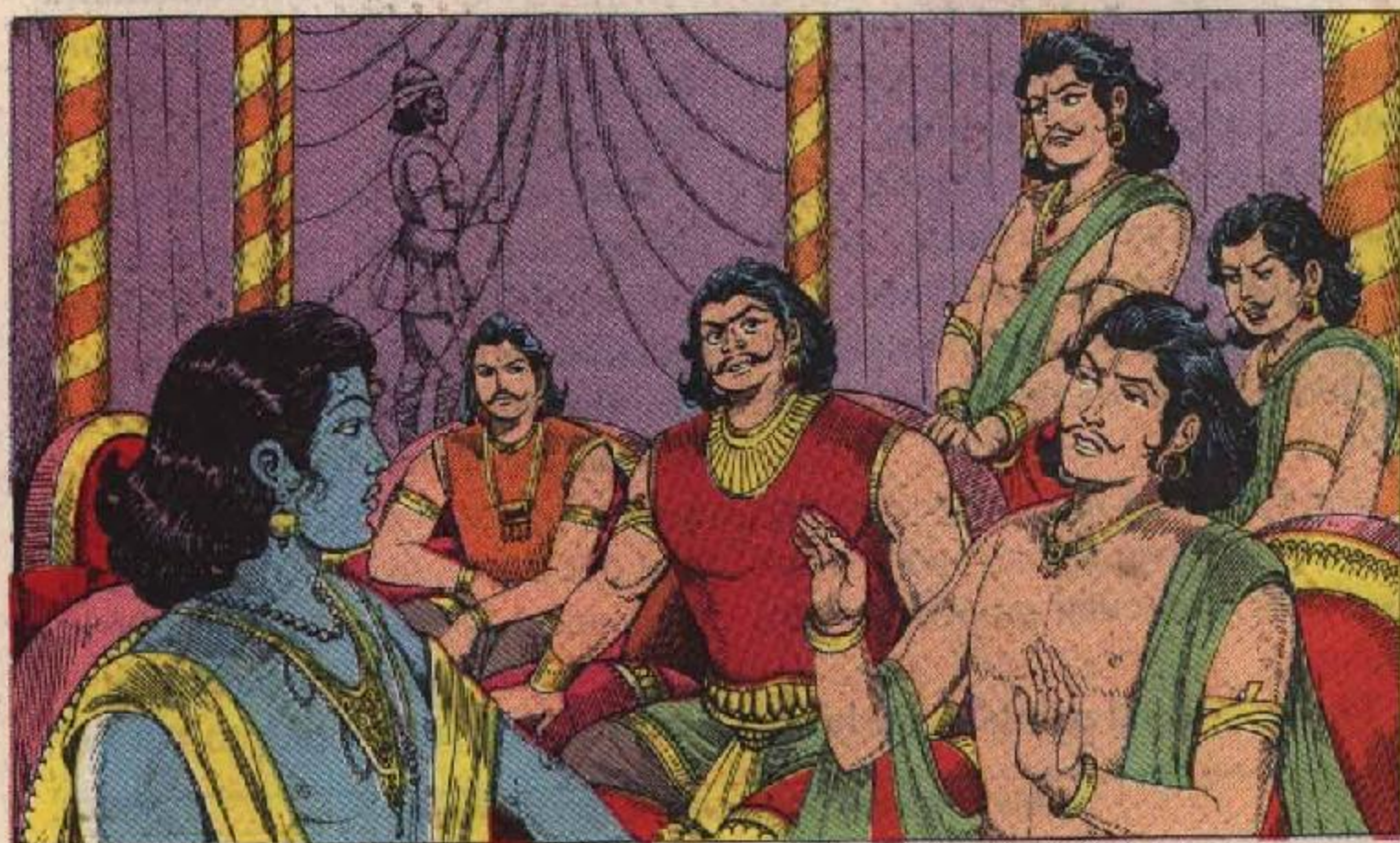
Lord Krishna replied sharply, "Yudhishtira, don't forget that you have lost your kingdom and my peace efforts have failed totally. Under the circumstances war is the only way to regain your lost territories. Therefore, this is a just war."

Satisfied at last, Yudhishtira alerted his armies and a great expectation rippled through the

ranks, as they awaited the signal to launch the attack.

Then Yudhishtira turned to Bhima and Arjuna and said: "We had agreed to be exiled for thirteen years because we didn't want to be the cause for the destruction of our great race. We endured severe adversity in the wilderness, in the hope that one day we'll be able to regain what is ours through peaceful means. But now all that is going to be changed. At the blowing of the bugle, our friends and relations will engage one another in mortal combats and perish. Do we need such a victory?"

But his two brothers replied, "Brother, Lord Krishna and Vidura, and our own mother, have blessed our objective. Therefore, this war must take place."



Duryodhana marshalled his eleven *Akshauhinis* (one *Akshauhini* consisted of two hundred thousand horsemen, foot soldiers, elephants, and chariots). Kripa, Drona, Salya, Saindhava, Sudakshana, Krithavarma, Aswathama, Karna, Bhurisrava, Sakuni and Bhalika were appointed generals, one for each *Akshauhini*.

Then Duryodhana went to Lord Bhishma and with folded hands beseeched him to assume overall command of the army.

"You must assume the supreme command of the Kaurava armies. There's none more capable than yourself. Under your generalship, our armies are bound to score resounding victories over the Pandavas. You are the only elder in our camp whose

authority none dare challenge. I know that you are greatly interested in our welfare and, therefore, I request you to lead the Kaurava armies in the battle."

Bhishma agreed to Duryodhana's request but imposed two conditions. One, he would not kill any of the Pandavas, and second, he would never fight side by side with Karna, the low-born. As the venerable warrior had never liked Karna for his boastful demeanour, he declared strongly that he would not fight alongside the latter.

When Karna heard this, he trembled with anger and declared hotly that he would not care to step on the battlefield as long as Bhishma was on his feet.

Though dismayed by this division in his ranks, Duryodhana went ahead





with his plan and Bhishma was ceremoniously appointed supreme commander of the Kaurava forces.

When Lord Balarama heard that the battle was about to begin, he went to the Pandava camp with a retinue of Yadava guards. Lord Krishna and Yudhishtira welcomed him warmly and waited to hear what he had to say.

Lord Balarama said: "A great battle is going to be fought. Countless persons will perish in this conflict. But I wish you all success and may victory crown your efforts. I shall similarly bless the Kauravas. I view both, Kauravas and Pandavas, impartially. I have often told Krishna about my feelings. But he has a great fondness for Arjuna. I know that as long as my brother Krishna,

Arjuna and Bhima remain allies, no one can be victorious over them. But a great sorrow overwhelms me when I think that the entire Kaurava race will be wiped out in this holocaust. Therefore, I shall go on a pilgrimage while you fight your dirty war."

And so Lord Balarama departed with a heavy heart.

Then Rukmi, brother of Rukmini, arrived with his legions and went straight to Arjuna.

"O Arjuna," he said boastfully. "Tell me if you need my help. I'll fall on the enemies and scatter them like chaff. I am the greatest warrior in the world. I shall wipe all the Kripas and Dronas off the world."

At this vain boasting, Arjuna smiled indulgently and said, "O Great Warrior! I am not afraid of anything. I was able to rescue Duryodhana from the Gandharvas single-handed. Alone, I burnt a large forest. I recovered the Virata king's livestock from the clutches of the Kauravas. However, if you so wish, do sit with us and watch the progress of the war."

Angered by these sarcastic words, Rukmi left the Pandava camp in a huff and went to the Kauravas. There again he boasted of his prowess as a valiant fighter, but Duryodhana too turned him away politely.

Rebuffed by both sides, Rukmi left for his own kingdom without entering the Kurukshetra battlefield.

Thus, only Lord Balarama and

Rukmi remained neutral in the great conflict that shook the sphere.

Then Duryodhana sent Uluka, son of Sakuni, as his messenger to the Pandava camp. Uluka met Yudhishtira and conveyed Duryodhana's message.

"Yudhishtira, you're a sly fellow and a hypocrite. You try to deceive the world with your stance of justice and righteousness. For this you take refuge in the holy scriptures and the Vedas. At least, try to wage a just war. And as for Krishna, he tried to dazzle us in the court with his cheap magical tricks. We shall not be taken in by his feats on the battlefield. Let him try for victory and regain the lost territories for the Pandavas. As for Bhima, he is only a glutton and is devoid of any fighting skill. His rightful place is in the kitchen."

But the Pandavas did not deign to reply to Duryodhana's insults and sent Uluka away.

Then the Pandava armies ranged themselves in the formations arranged by Dhrishtadyumna, their supreme commander. It was decided that Arjuna would take on Karna; Bhima would oppose Duryodhana; Dhrishtaketu would engage Kripa; Uttamouja would fight Aswathama; Yuyudhana would go against Saindhava. Sikhandi would obstruct Bhishma; Sahadeva would challenge Sakuni; Abhimanyu would draw out Vrikshasena, and Dhrishtadyumna would fight the famous Drona.

The Pandava armies wheeling about in several formations advanced towards the centre of the field. Likewise, the Kauravas advanced and at last the two armies faced each other in the greatest battle to be fought since the world began. Lord Bhishma drew Duryodhana aside, and briefly compared the strength of the two armies.

— To continue



A house is not a home!

☆ *How and where do we use 'house' and 'home'? asks reader Debiprasanna Mukherjee of Nikunjabpur, West Bengal.*

A 'house' is a dwelling place, in its most common meaning. It need not always be a place where a family stays. Whereas a 'home' is the residence of one's family which, in other words, is the scene of domestic life, with its emotional associations. One can build a house for one's family, one can also 'build' a home, by marrying and rearing children and living in the company of others close to the family. When you say, "I'm going home", you mean you are joining your family at wherever they are residing. However, when you say "I'm going back to my house", it means you have been away from your house for a while and you intend returning to your own place. A house is **not** a home, but a home takes into account one's dwelling place as well.

☆ *P. Parameswar of Kusum Kuhare, in Orissa, came across the statement by Gandhiji in his book: My Experiments with Truth. "These friends often cost my wife bitter tears". What did he mean by that? our reader asks.*

Obviously, Gandhiji was referring to his friends, whose words or deeds might have upset Kasturba, who would not have expressed her anguish openly, but decided to suffer the bitterness silently. The courageous lady would not have even protested to Gandhiji once the friends were not with him; she would have taken care that she did not shed tears in their presence or even when she and Gandhiji were alone. Gandhiji was really paying her a tribute.

☆ *What does the phrase 'dog in the manger' mean? asks reader K. Suguna Kumar, of Kasargod, Kerala.*

Manger is a trough in which food is laid for cattle in the cattle-shed. If a dog were to get into the shed and make itself comfortable and prevent the cattle from entering or eating their food kept for them, it only shows that the dog neither can enjoy the food, nor will it let others eat it. Such a situation is called 'dog in the manger'.

Words, Both Ways

Here are the answers to the "Reversals" published in the October issue:-

1. LEPER (Repel) 2. OGRE 3. WARTS 4. EROS 5. WAR 6. PEELS
7. REINED (DENIER is a unit of weight for estimating the fineness of silk, rayon, and nylon yarn.)

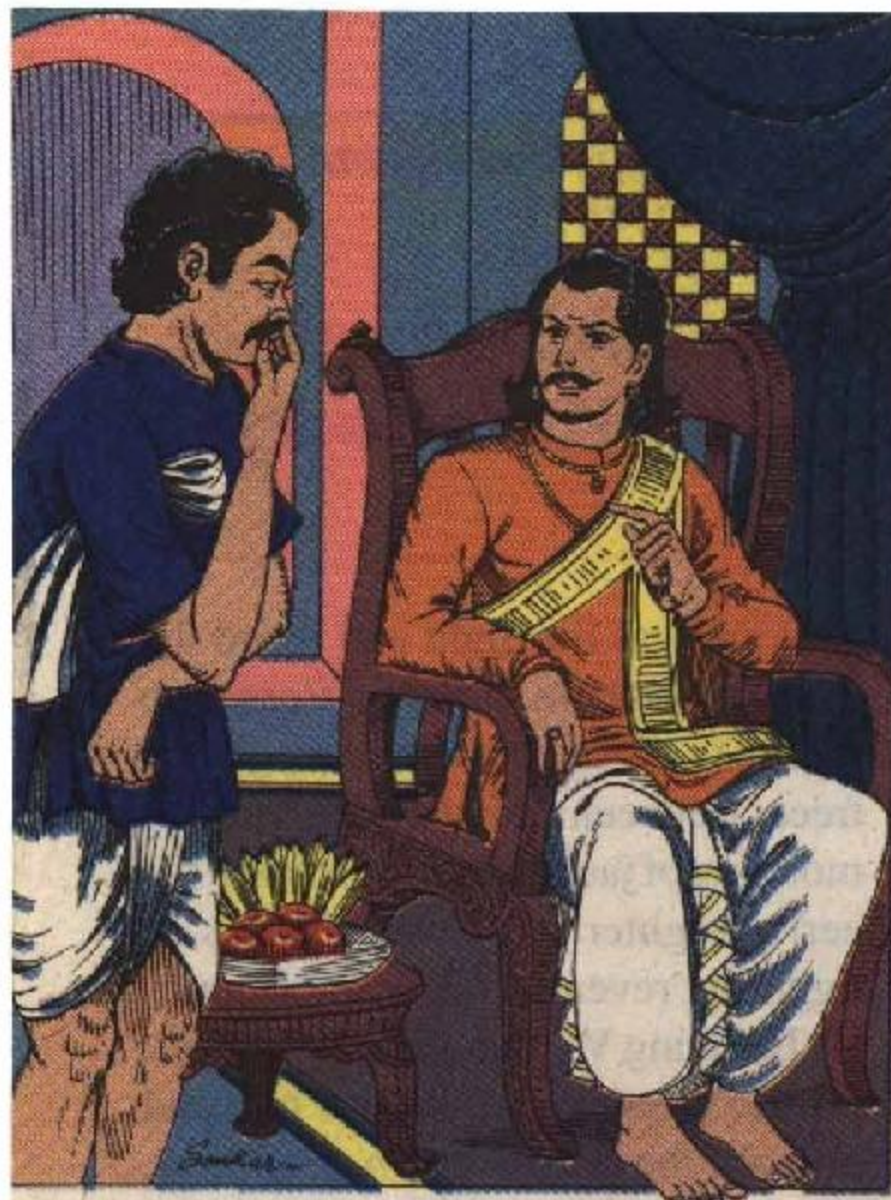
New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire

Experience rather than Knowledge

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikram did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King, normally you should be enjoying a good sleep at this hour of the night. Instead of doing that, what makes you go through this strange ritual? I'm sure you've studied all the Vedas and Sastras and know them by-heart. But do you know that experience has a greater value than mere knowledge? One who is devoid of personal experience will never progress in life. I don't know whether you've had adequate personal experience in life. Perhaps you can compare yourself with Sankar of Sankaridurg. You must listen to his story." The





vampire then began his narration.

Sankar was a rich man. He had inherited much wealth from his father and led a luxurious life spending a sizeable part of that wealth. However, he was also keen on acquiring knowledge, and he often held discussions with intellectuals on various topics. To them he appeared a very knowledgeable person. They referred to him as a *Sastrapungava* or one who has mastered all Sastras.

It was a pity that such a respectable person soon became conceited. He looked down upon everybody else, taking them to be fools. He had a penchant for finding fault with others, in whatever they did or said. For this he made use of his knowledge to

point out shortcomings and shortfalls in people by quoting verse and chapter from the Sastras.

Being a rich person, he used to get a lot of visitors. Many of them went to him in the hope of receiving monetary help when they presented him with their problems. However, he would strive to give twists to their problems and send them back empty-handed, telling them that the problems would solve by themselves, and they should not worry about them. Though they would not be happy or satisfied, they realised that they should not expect any kind of help from him.

One day, Sankar had a visitor, Padmanabh by name. "Sir," he pleaded with Sankar, "I've decided to perform my daughter's marriage and promised the boy's people that it would take place in six months time. I hope to raise enough funds by then. Unfortunately, they are insisting on a quick wedding, within the next fortnight. The ceremony will need at least ten thousand rupees. Right now I've only five thousand with me. What shall I do under the circumstances? My only concern is, my daughter should not suffer if there's going to be some delay."

"But, there's no auspicious day in the next six months!" Sankar promptly pointed out. "Why don't you tell the boy's people?"

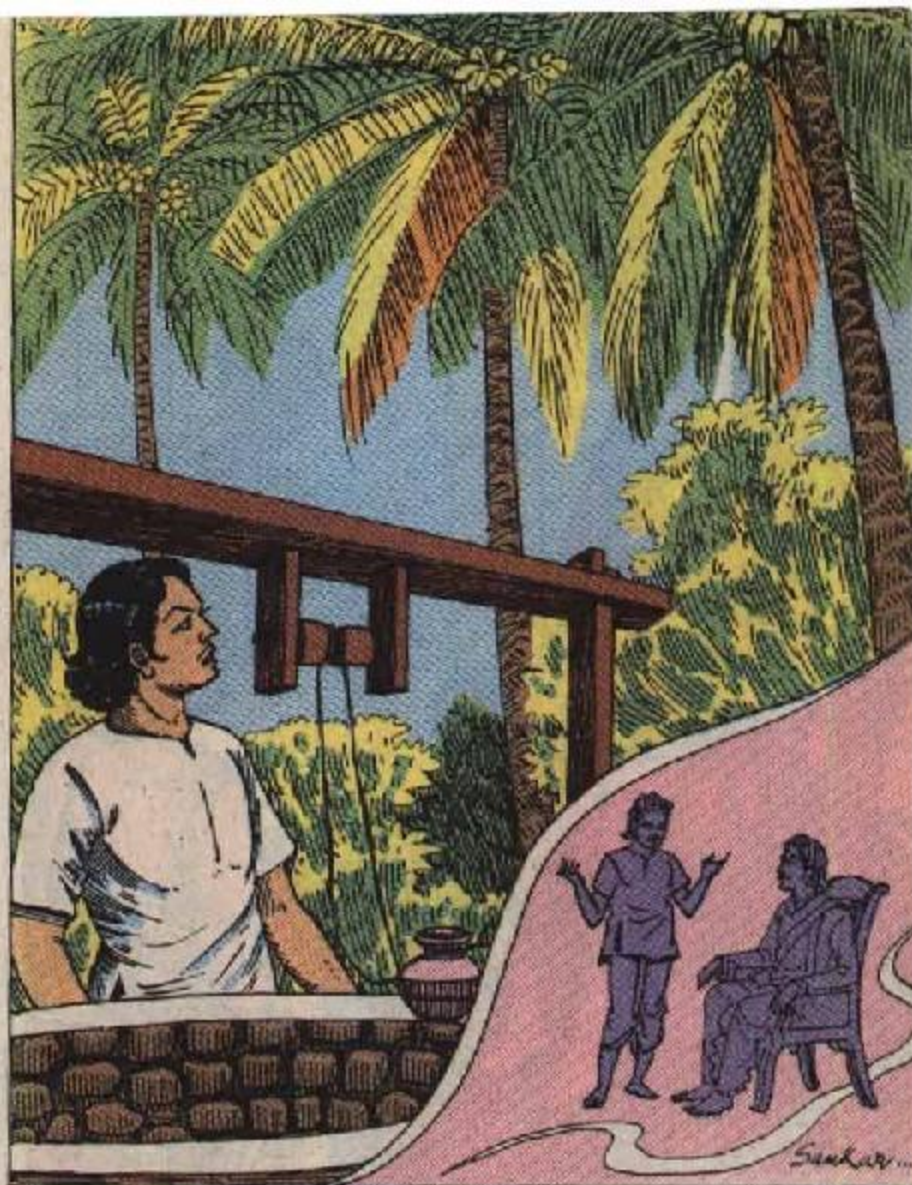
"Of course, they too are aware of this fact," said Padmanabha. "They

suggest that the wedding should take place immediately and later some *puja* or *homa* could be performed to ward off any evil effects. They're adamant that they cannot wait beyond two weeks."

Sankar did not respond for some time. Padmanabha once again pleaded: "Sir, the boy is quite handsome and well-behaved. He is from a respectable family. The proposal appears to be quite attractive, and I would not want it to slip from our hands. We may not get such a good match later. Don't you think we must give more weight to the proposal itself than the date of wedding? I'm inclined to agree with the boy's people and perform the wedding in the next fortnight. Please help me with a loan of five thousand rupees!"

"As there is no auspicious date, it will be against Sastraic principles to conduct the wedding in the next two weeks," said Sankar, assertively. "You know this, yet you want to go against the Sastras and later do something to remedy for defying the Sastras. Sastras do not prescribe any such compensation. As you are inclined to go against the Sastras in which I've firm belief, I don't wish to help you!"

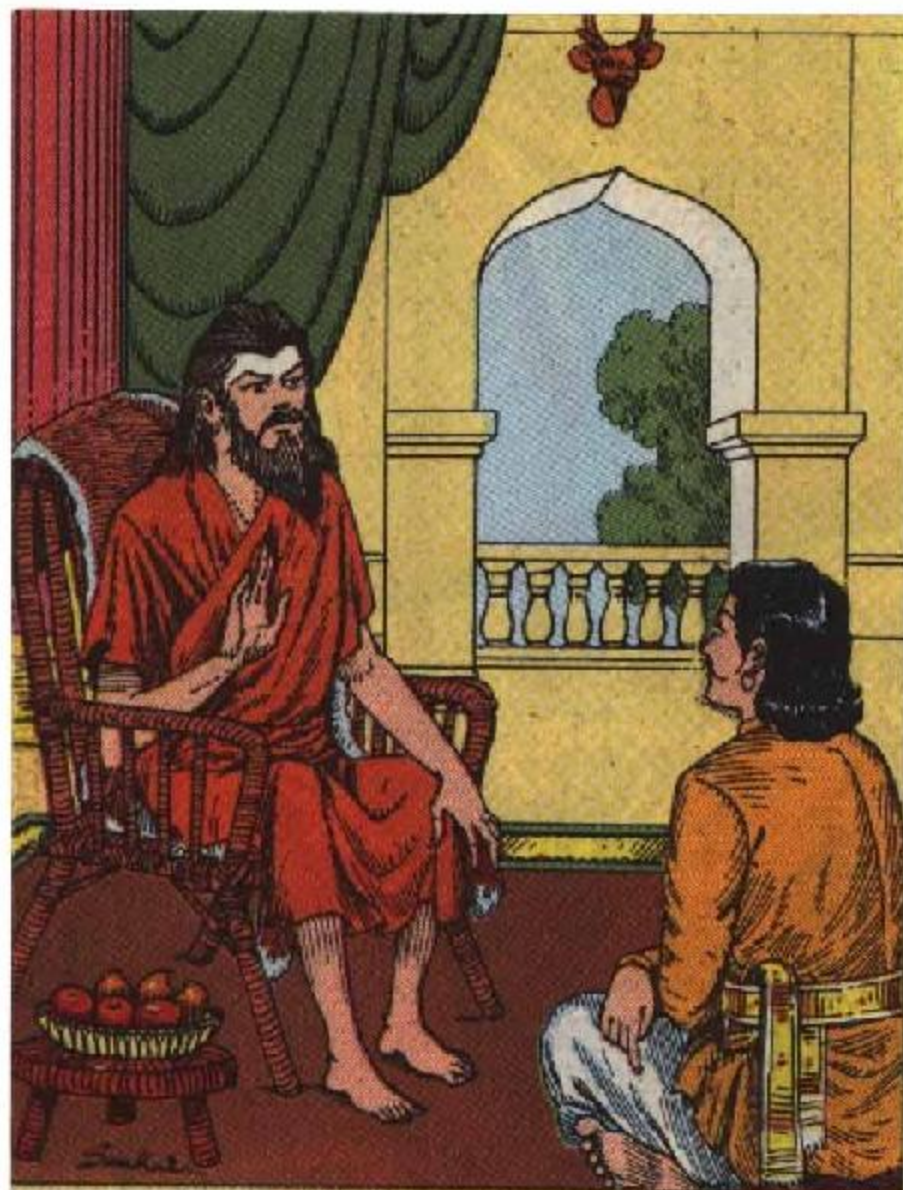
"Sir, you do accept Sudhakar Sastri of Vikaspuri as a great intellectual, don't you?" argued Padmanabha. "In fact, I had consulted him, and he approved of my approach to the problem. I am, therefore, surprised at your



stand in the matter." And he walked out of Sankar's residence even without formally taking leave of him.

After he had gone away, Sankar was left to thinking for a long while. At that moment, Chandermohan came to meet him. He was contemplating purchasing a new house. He had already seen the house just outside the town limits. The price was within his means. However, there was one hitch. The compound behind the house was full of coconut trees. Chandermohan had had some bitter experience with coconut trees. He once planted coconut saplings in the place where he had hitherto been living. Soon after that his grandfather passed away and his father fell ill; and it was only after





he pulled out the saplings that his father recovered. Since then, Chandermohan went about believing that coconut trees had malefic influence on his family. That was why he was hesitating to buy the country house which otherwise had attracted him.

When he explained his views to Sankar, he remarked: "Don't entertain such superstitions. Coconut trees do not harm human beings. That's what the Sastras say. Why, don't you know that tender coconuts are good for health? Don't be a slave to superstitions. Go ahead, and buy the house on an auspicious day and time. Don't lose the chance."

"May I make a request?" pleaded

Chandermohan. "Please buy the house, cut down the coconut trees, and then hand it over to me."

"The Sastras say that fruit-bearing trees should never be cut," said Sankar. "So, if I were to buy that house and hand it over to you after cutting the coconut trees, I shall only be going against the Sastras. I won't do that."

"Maybe that's how you look at it," said Chandermohan by way of argument, "but Pandit Sudhakar Sastri of Vikaspuri had commended me and said the safety of the family should be more important."

After he went away, Sankar wondered how two persons not known to each other had only praise for Sudhakar Sastri. He wished to have more details about this Shastri and decided to go to Vikaspuri. Just then, a *sanyasi* came to Sankaran's residence. He received him reverentially and made him comfortable. "Swami! I've studied the Vedas and Sastras, but I would like you to test my knowledge."

"It's true that a study of the Vedas and Sastras will give you knowledge," remarked the sanyasi, "but there's no method by which the amount of knowledge acquired can be assessed. Tell me, why do you wish to measure your knowledge?"

"I very much want my knowledge to be of use to others," said Sankar very humbly, "but whenever I quote the scriptures, I find people do not

accept them or agree with me." He then told the sanyasi about Padmanabha and Chandermohan.

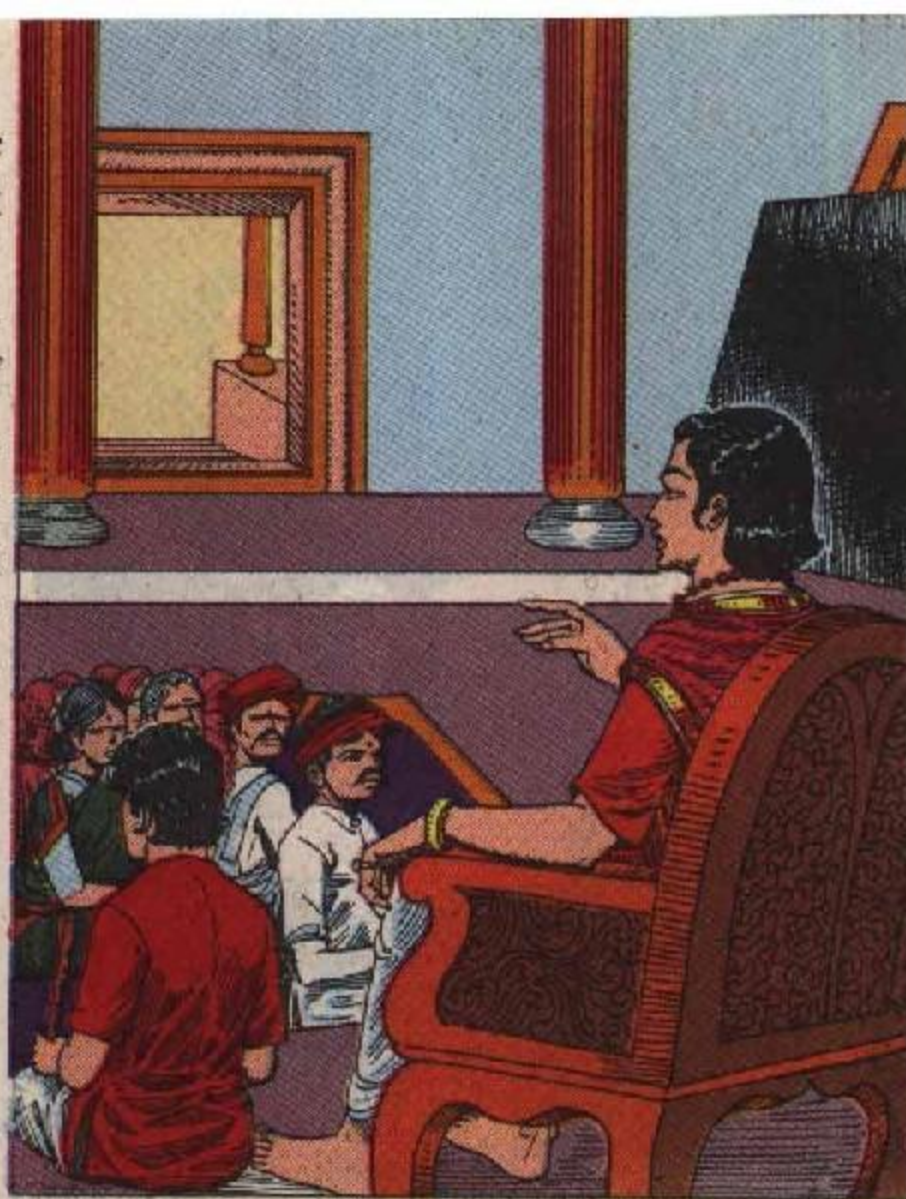
The sanyasi listened to him carefully and then said: "It's not enough if you have knowledge of the Sastras. You may know all the Sastras by-heart, but remember there's something like experience, which gives you more knowledge. Experience is a reflection of life and, therefore, you must mix knowledge with experience whenever you wish to advise others. That'll be more helpful to them. When people come to you for help, understand their problems well and use your practical knowledge in offering a solution. There's no point in quoting the Vedas and Sastras at that time. In fact, what the Sastras also say is judicious use of practical knowledge or experience."

"Swami, how can one advise a person if he is illiterate or ignorant?" Sankar defended himself. "He should be told what the Sastras state. He will then believe or accept what the Sastras say. One can only point out what's right or what's wrong as stated in the Sastras."

"The Sastras also mention about those who do not help others!" said the sanyasi.

"They also warn against helping those who are stupid and foolish!" retorted Sankar.

"I feel you should go and meet Sudhakar Sastri of Vikaspuri. He

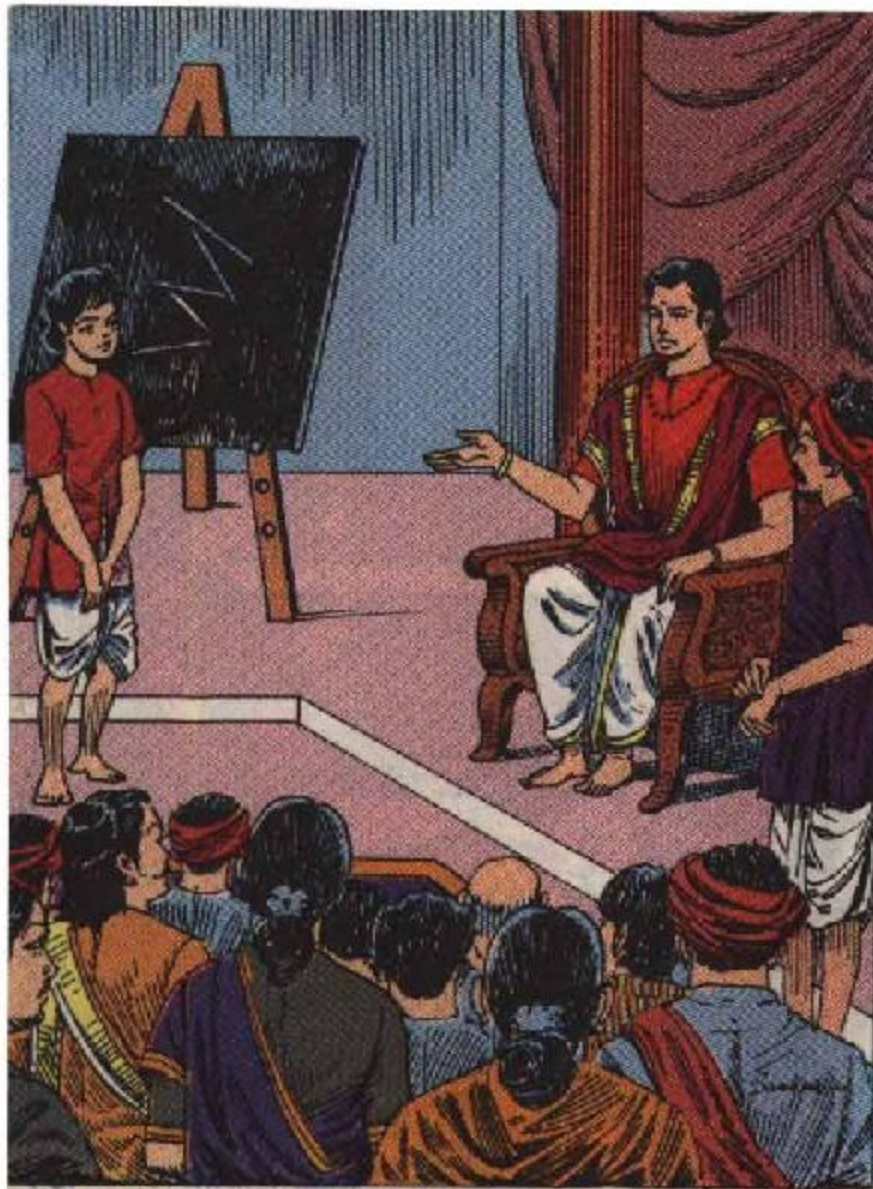


would tell you all about experience and practical knowledge. Watch him how he deals with people's problems." The sanyasi then took leave of Sankar.

When the Sanyasi also suggested his meeting with Sudhakar Sastri, Sankar decided that he should not delay going to Vikaspuri any longer. The next day itself he started. He was surprised when he saw Sastri's house. It was so huge. He slowly went in and found a crowd facing Sudhakar Sastri. A fifteen-year-old boy sat by his side, and a little away from them was a black board. The boy held a flute in one hand and had an open book on his lap.

Sankar saw one among the crowd stand up and ask: "Sastriji, man is the





creature of nature, and 'it is nature which sustains him. That's why he sings about nature, the rivers and mountains, the trees and the birds on them, and the sky and the stars. But what use? Those things do not look after his day to day needs!'"

Instead of answering him, the Pandit turned to the boy sitting by his side. "Murali, you sing a song for me from your book. That alone will inspire me today."

Murali turned the pages in his book and chose a song and sang it aloud. Strangely, the composition was devoid of any ideals or meanings capable of inspiring anyone. But Sastri began to praise the song: "Wah! What a song! How impregnated with truth!

And how well you sang, my boy! No wonder, you are named Murali (flute)."

The pandit then turned to the gentleman who had raised a doubt about the nature's bounty. "You want Mother Nature to appreciate your poetry, don't you? How lofty an ideal! I feel extremely lucky to have met a person like you! How can I predict what fortune awaits you in course of time when you sing in praise of her?"

Sudhakar Sastri's reply made the young poet very happy. He left the place. It was then the turn of a farmer. "Sir, my fields give me good yield year after year. My granaries are full. The price of grains is also rising. When should I sell so that I can expect a good profit? Please advise me."

The pandit once again turned to the boy by his side. Murali got up, went up to the blackboard and drew a figure. It looked like that of a clown. "How realistic!" commented Sudhakar Sastri. "The doubts in the farmer's mind are well represented here." He then closed his eyes for some time and posed as if he was meditating. On opening his eyes, he looked at the farmer. "When there is famine, the price will rise again. If we begin importing grains, then our money will flow into other countries. You never allowed that to happen. In a way, that was your sacrifice for the

sake of the nation, and I feel that I'm fortunate to have met you. How am I qualified advise such a great person as to when he should sell the grains in his granary?"

He seemed to have made the farmer very happy. He too got up and went away. Next, a woman rose to present her problem. "I normally forgive my children whenever they do some mischief. At the same time I blame them if I find that other children are excelling them. That's something I can't tolerate. How can I change this attitude, sir?"

The pandit signalled to Murali to play the flute. He played, but what came out of the instrument was something jarring. "Nobody can play the flute like you, Murali!" he complimented the boy. "I must say you're the incarnation of Lord Krishna himself!" Sudhakar Sastri then turned to the woman. "It's nothing unusual for mothers to tolerate the mischiefs of their children and speak about them to others with pride. Amma, you've gone a step further by not hiding your feelings from them. I don't find adequate words to praise your affection for your children. I bow my head before such a great woman!" She too went away happy and contented.

Sankar was watching all these happenings in the pandit's residence with great interest. He wondered how the poet, the farmer, or the woman would have really benefited by the



praise showered on them by the pandit. He thought he would better clear his doubt with the sanyasi and no one else. So, he went back to Sankaridurg and searched for the sanyasi. It looked as though he had anticipated a visit by Sankar.

He narrated his experience in Vikaspuri. "I don't understand why Sudhakar Sastri should go about praising anybody and everybody. I've a serious doubt whether he had read any of the Vedas or the Sastras at all!"

"Sankar, you've unnecessary doubts," replied the sanyasi. "There is nothing that Sudhakar Sastri has not read or studied. More than that, he has acquired a lot of practical knowledge, too. You think over what I've



told you. I shall meet you again when I come here after six months."

The vampire concluded his narration and turned to Vikramaditya. "O King! There's no doubt that the sanyasi believed that the pandit was a shade superior to Sankar. But was it his firm and final opinion? Sankar would quote verse and chapter from the scriptures and point out to the people whether they were wrong or right on the basis of what is given in the Sastras. On the other hand, the pandit was making use of a foolhardy boy to promote his own views and impose them on the people. He chose an easy way out, by praising or complimenting whoever approached him. Did the sanyasi approve of Sudhakar Sastri's method? If you know the answers and yet prefer to maintain silence, let me warn you, your head will be blown to a thousand pieces!"

Vikramaditya just brushed aside the vampire's threat. "The people readily thought that both Sankar and

Sudhakar Sastri were competent and capable of solving their problems and clear their doubts. So, they approached them, hoping to get the best advice. They were all ordinary, common people, not at all well versed in the Vedas or the Sastras. There was thus no point in explaining the scriptures to them. What they actually needed was a straight solution to their problems. They would be satisfied with that kind of help. After quoting the scriptures, Sankar did not care to help them. On the contrary, Sudhakar Sastri willingly listened to everybody and in his own way made them happy and sent them away contented. He achieved this by making use of his practical knowledge and experience. That's why the sanyasi held the pandit on a higher pedestal."

The vampire realised that Vikramaditya had outsmarted him again. He flew back to the ancient tree, carrying the corpse with him. And the king drew his sword and went after the vampire.



In The Emerald Isles

Text : Meera Nair ♦ Artist : Goutam Sen

The Andamans comprise four main groups of islands – **North, Middle, South** and **Little Andamans**.

Quite close to North Andamans are two uninhabited islands formed by volcanoes – the islands of **Barren** and **Narcondam**. The Andamanese name for Barren island is *Molatarchona* or 'Smoke Island'. The 608m high volcano that rises abruptly from the sea is the country's only active volcano. It erupted in 1991 after being dormant for nearly 200 years. The volcano that formed Narcondam is extinct.

Port Blair, the capital of this tropical paradise, is in South Andamans. It is the landing point of the archipelago. Dolphins greet ships arriving at the Haddo harbour, Port Blair's main harbour, and amuse passengers with their delightful pranks.

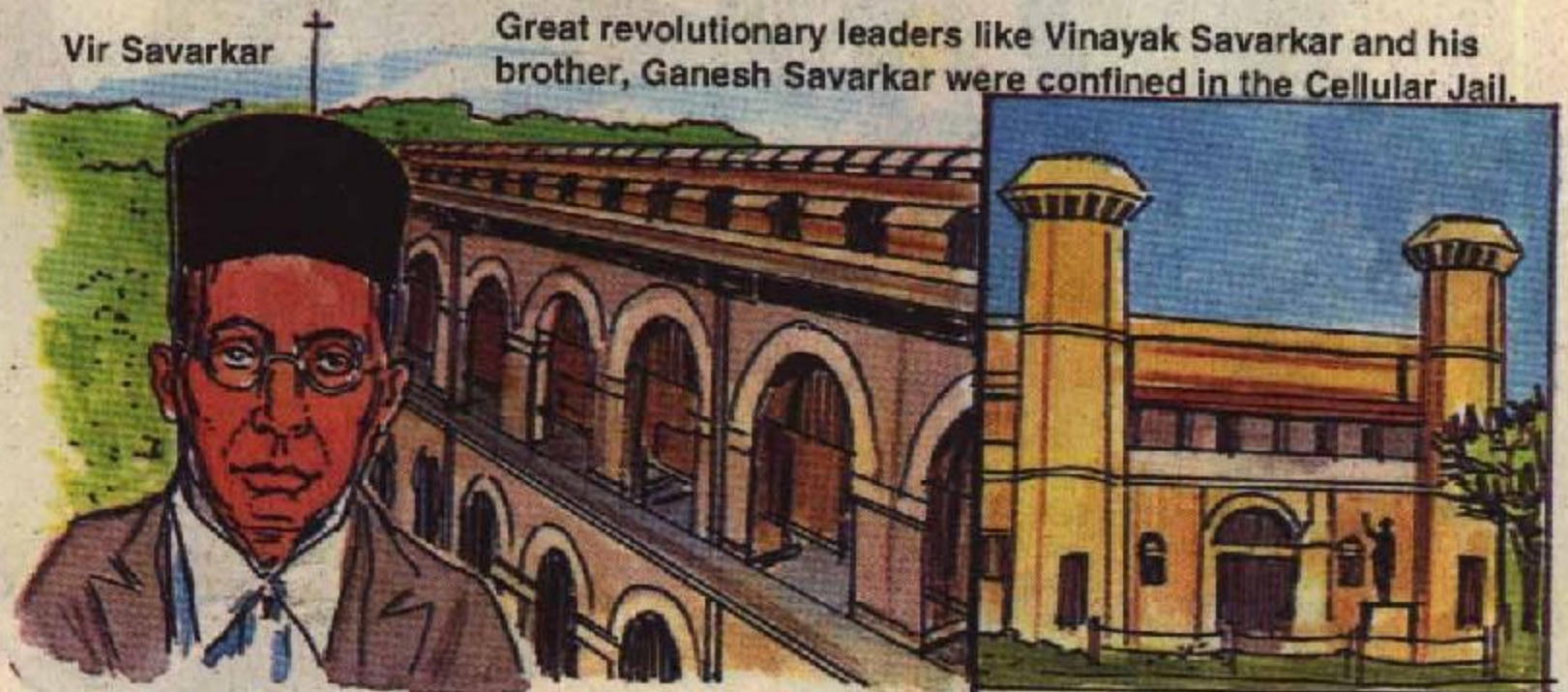
Port Blair was named after Archibald Blair, a British surveyor who in 1789 chose this place as the site for the East India Company to start a settlement.

The Japanese occupied the islands around 1942 during World War II. Their brief rule left a lasting impact on the islands – the concrete bunkers seen at vantage points all over the islands were built by them; the fruits and edible crops that they introduced, continue to thrive and there are many locals who can speak Japanese fluently.



Vir Savarkar

Great revolutionary leaders like Vinayak Savarkar and his brother, Ganesh Savarkar were confined in the Cellular Jail.



Several Indians migrated to the Andamans soon after independence and settled down in Port Blair. Among them Bengalis are the largest single linguistic group and Tamilians, the second largest.

The most prominent place in Port Blair is the Cellular Jail, so called because it had only cells — 698 in all and not a single dormitory.

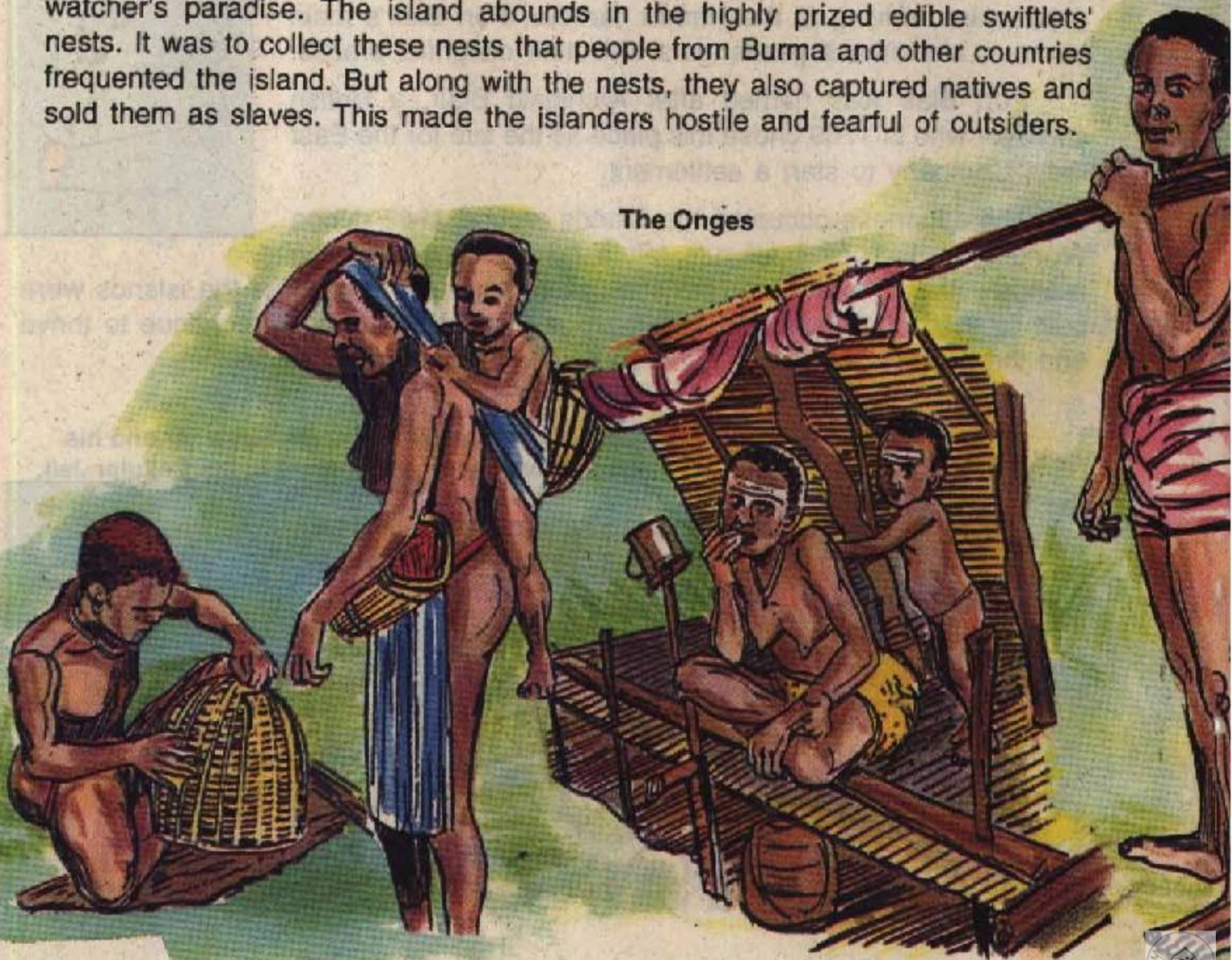
It was built between 1886 and 1906 by the British to house dangerous criminals. Later freedom fighters and revolutionaries were imprisoned there. Today it is a national monument.

Port Blair has one of the oldest and largest saw mills in Asia — the Chatham Saw Mills. Its showroom in Haddo exhibits some of the best species of wood in the world.

Ross Island, once the seat of British administration, is a few kilometres away from Port Blair. The island was abandoned after it was hit by an earthquake.

Chiriyā Tapu (Bird Island) is about 26km away from Port Blair. It is a bird watcher's paradise. The island abounds in the highly prized edible swiftlets' nests. It was to collect these nests that people from Burma and other countries frequented the island. But along with the nests, they also captured natives and sold them as slaves. This made the islanders hostile and fearful of outsiders.

The Onges





A typical
Nicobari hut



A Nicobari dance

The most hostile of the tribal islanders are the *Jarawas* and the *Sentinelese*. The *Jarawas* number around 200 and live mostly on the west coast of **South** and **Middle Andamans**. They are hunters and live like the people of the Stone Age did a thousand years ago. The *Sentinelese* live on **North Sentinel Island**. They do not allow anyone to come in close contact with them. They are among the most isolated human communities in the world.

The dwindling group of *Onges* are found mostly at Dugong creek in **Little Andaman**. Both men and women keep their heads clean shaven and decorate their face and body with clay. They enjoy smoking pipes made from crab's claws.

The *Andamanese* now cultivate land and have given up their nomadic way of life.

All the four main tribes, *Jarawas*, *Sentinelese*, *Onges* and *Andamanese* belong to the negrito stock.

The Nicobar Islands are separated from the Andamans by the Ten Degree Channel, considered one of the most

A tribal at work





A Shompen mother and child

forests of Great Nicobar, the southernmost island of Nicobar. *Shompens*, who have a weakness for honey, have perfected the art of extracting it without hurting themselves. Before approaching a beehive, they chew the leaves of a certain plant and smear a paste made from the leaves on their arms and faces. This prevents bees from stinging them.

On the west coast of Great Nicobar is the small island of **Megapode** named after the rare birds called Megapodes that nest here.

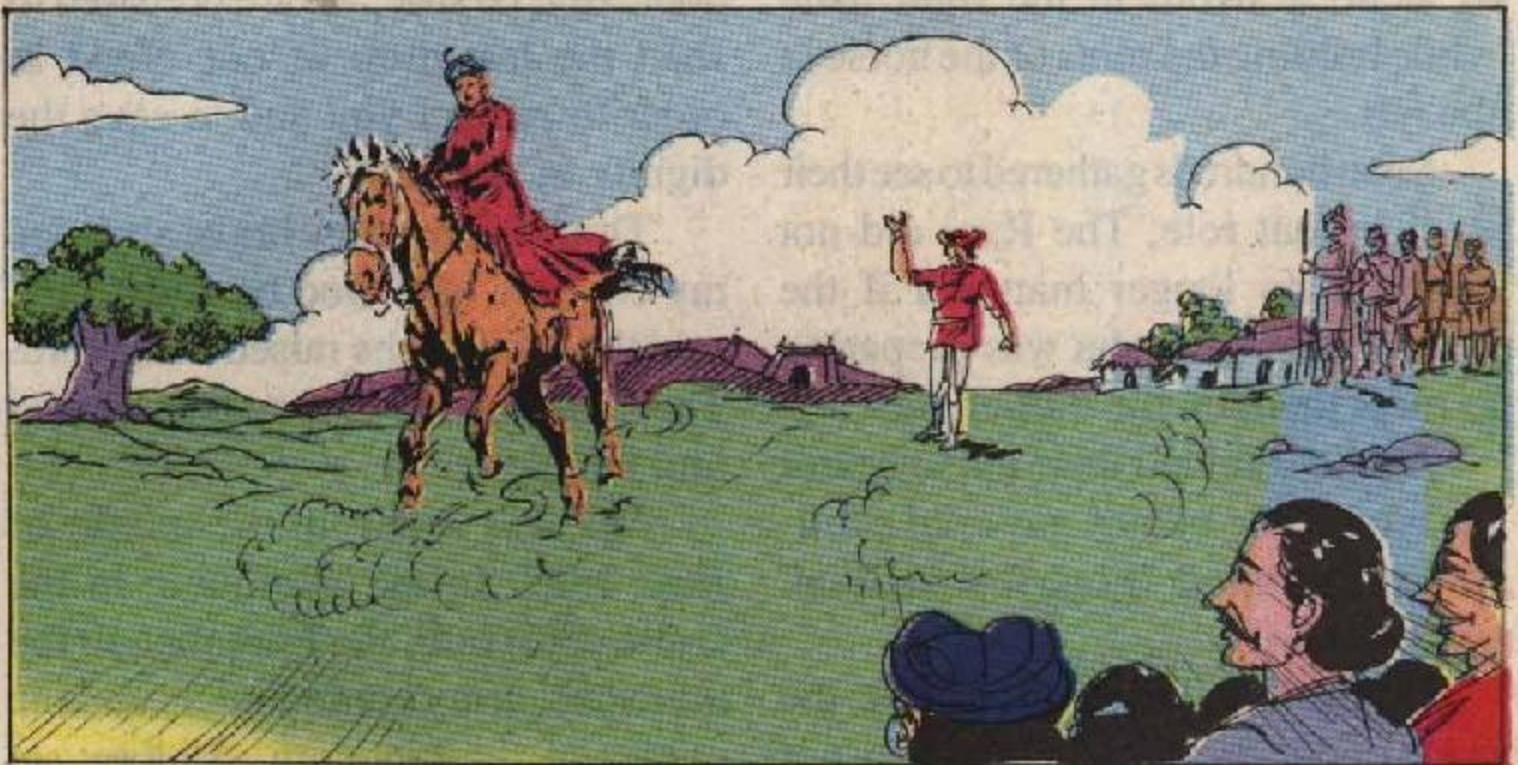
Pygmalian Point, also known as **Indira Point** is at the southernmost tip of the island, barely 150km away from the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Besides being the southernmost tip of the entire archipelago, it is also the southernmost tip of India and the end of our long journey along the coast.

The Megapode



And now, get ready for yet another enthralling and informative journey, this time, along the banks of the River Kaveri, the lifeline of the South. The first part of our new series on the Rivers of India — **KAVERI YATRA** — begins from January 1998.

The Saga of 1857



The story so far: The foreign occupants of India had no business to decide what the Indians should or should not do. That was the stern sentiment growing all over the country. The Sepoys camping at Meerat rise in rebellion, defy their British masters, and march towards Delhi. This inspires tens of thousands of people to rise against the government imposed on them by the English East India Company. At Cawnpore, the followers of Nana Sahib fight the British. A massacre follows.

As the sun rose above the beautiful city of Jhansi, people were amazed to see a handsome 'young man' riding a horse on the vast ground beside the palace. Another young man, older than the rider, was running around, guiding the rider in controlling the horse. What was more intriguing, some ladies of the palace were moving around and encouraging the rider.

Nobles and others familiar with

the royal castle knew the man who was helping the rider like an expert. He was a Brahmin from the holy city of Puri, Chandan Huzoori by name. He was looked upon by the Rani of Jhansi, Lakshmibai, as her elder brother.

His presence soon made the on-lookers suspicious about the identity of the rider. Their guess proved correct, for, when they bowed, the rider smiled, the unmistakable smile of their

5. JHANSI LIBERATED!

beloved Rani.

So, in the guise of a young man, the Rani was mastering the art of riding. She was even practising how to wield a sword in the right hand while holding the reins of the horse in the left.

Soon hundreds gathered to see their Rani in that role. The Rani did not mind. It no longer mattered if the enemy knew that she was preparing to meet them on the battlefield.

As the Rani led their horse nearer the crowd, the people gave out a full-throated greeting: "Long live our Rani, our Mother!"

"Long live Jhansi, long live the pride of our people—though I may not live long!" said the Rani. Her voice was tender, yet there was thunder in it. For a moment the people stood

silent, though thrilled. Suddenly, then a hundred voices shouted out: "O Mother, we know very well how powerful and ruthless a foe is at our door. But, be sure, we are prepared to shed the last drop of our blood in order to protect you and to save the dignity of our land!"

"Don't I know how brave and kind my children are? God be with you!" said the Rani as she raised her sword. Then, turning her horse, she galloped into her castle.

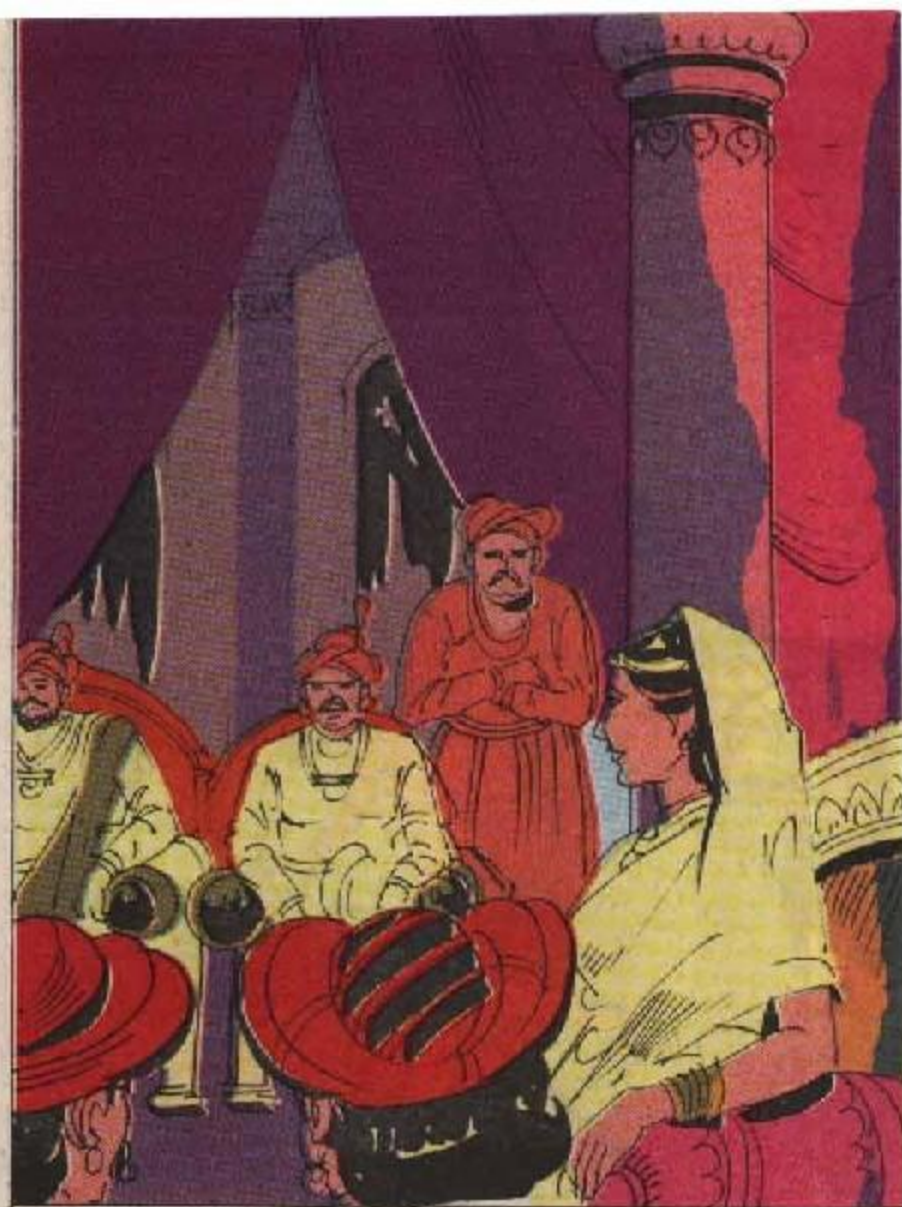
This was a day in the month of June 1857. In the afternoon, in the castle courtyard, the Rani met all the ministers, army commanders and the nobles of the kingdom. As they sat and heard in serene silence, the Rani said: "A battle is going on at Cawnpore. The valiant Nana Sahib,



who taught me riding, fencing and archery in my childhood, is fighting the British. The Company's people are fighting back from their fort and appear to be in danger of losing the battle. So, the British army will rush to their rescue. I think this is the right time for us to declare our independence! But I seek your advice. I may be wrong!"

"You are absolutely right, Rani-ma! The time is ripe for that. The British here are so confident of their strength that they spend practically all their time merry-making, gambling and drinking. Here is a golden opportunity to take them by surprise," said an elderly noble.

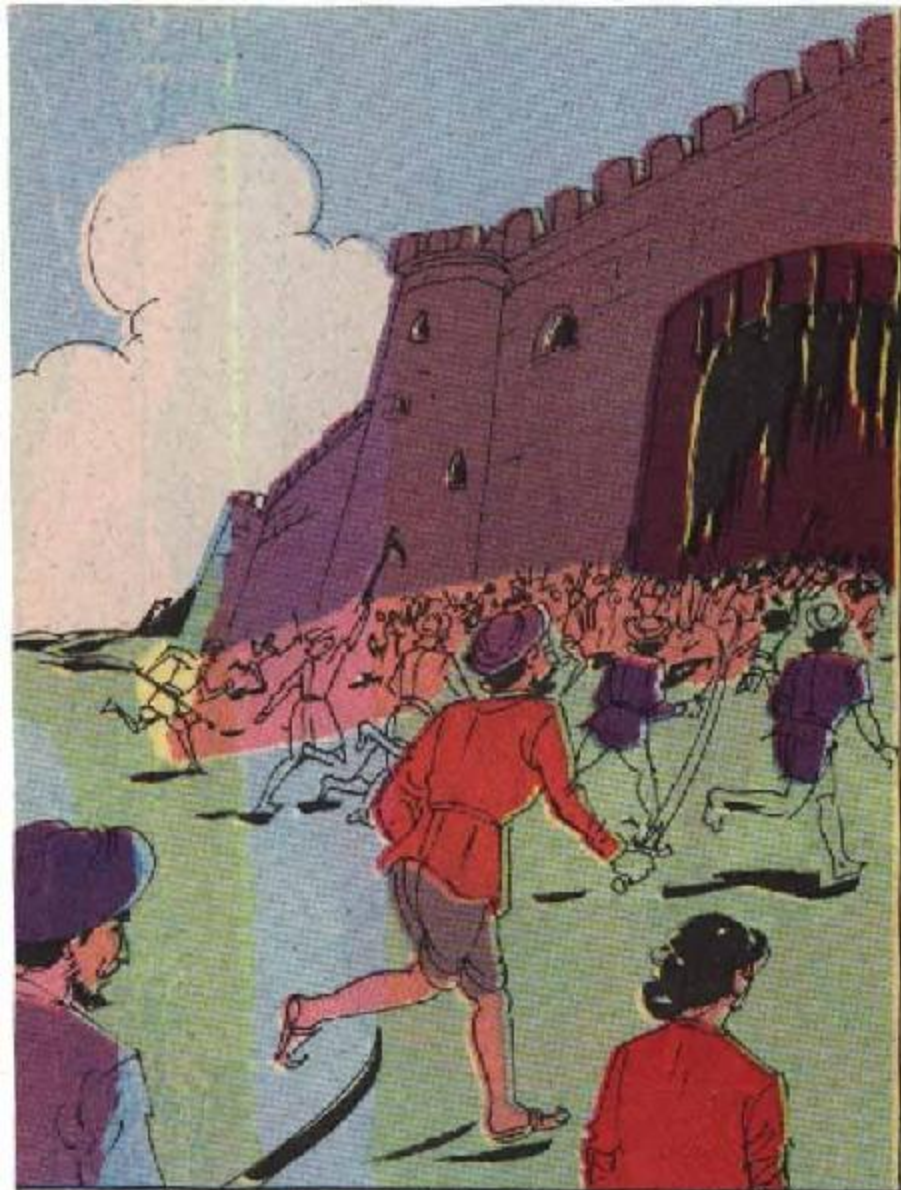
The Rani smiled in appreciation of the noble's advice and nodded, but turning to her chief minister, Lakshman Rao, she said: "As you all know, my husband had adopted our son in the presence of the British Political Agent, Major Ellis, as well as the Commander of their army here, Major Maron. Both those officers acknowledged our son as the heir to the throne of Jhansi and myself as the Regent till the prince came of age. But, under the instructions from their greedy and arrogant governor-general, Dalhousie, they have gone back on their word of honour. Now they shamelessly say that the adoption is not acceptable to them. They would perhaps have been satisfied if the late Maharaja had adopted the Company



or Dalhousie as his son! Well, except the British, everybody understands that this is a clear betrayal of faith. But we should not punish the British here without giving them a chance to leave us in peace and get out of Jhansi."

"Mother, here is the copy of a letter written by a highly respected British officer to his bosses some three years ago. It says: 'The Rani is highly respected and esteemed, and fully capable of doing justice to her charge as Regent, a lady of very high character and much respected by everyone in Jhansi.' Strange, that they should now contradict themselves! It is equally strange that they should think they, and not Rani, are capable of ruling Jhansi," the chief minister





added.

"Either they do not know what they are doing or they are deceiving themselves. In any case they must pay for their conduct," said the Rani.

The gathering dispersed after some more deliberations.

Next day Lakshman Rao sent emissaries to meet the British Agent. What they told the British amounted to this: Jhansi was free and it remains free. If the Company was under the delusion that it owns Jhansi, then it is time for it to come out of it. You have lived here not as our guests or friends but as our oppressors. The Rani, the rightful ruler of Jhansi and the people of Jhansi wish and direct you that you should quit Jhansi immediately or

face the consequences! We have not forgotten and you too should not forget that your soldiers have been very cruel to our innocent people. You have plundered them and murdered them. Once we declare war against you, our suffering people will not be kind towards you. Better get away from their wrath immediately."

The British residents of Jhansi were surprised beyond words, but they were under the impression that the native crowds, disorderly, confused and untrained as they were, could not prove to be any match for their well-disciplined soldiers. The army of the King of Jhansi had been disbanded after the Company annexed the kingdom.

As the British did not act according to the notice given by Lakshman Rao, the people of the city, led by the former soldiers of the army of Jhansi, were seen heading towards the Company's fort. To the surprise of the British, the crowd behaved in a most disciplined manner under the command of two of the former officers of the royal court of Jhansi, Kala Khan and Mohammed Hussein.

The attack on the fort was brief. The British accepted defeat and came out of the fort.

"These are the fellows who, under their wretched officer Neill, burnt down our sweet homes!" shouted some people in the crowd. Indeed, their villages had been wantonly de-

stroyed and their kinsmen massacred by the British army officer Neill. Those Company officials living in Jhansi had little to do with it. But who would explain that and to whom at that moment charged with excitement?

About seventy-five British people were killed, while the banner of Jhansi flew high over the fallen fort of the East India Company. There was great jubilation throughout Jhansi and its victory inspired several other principalities to decide their course of action. We read in the *History of Freedom Movement in Madhya Pradesh* (published by the Government of Madhya Pradesh):

"The news of the revolt in Jhansi reached Sagar on 8th June and with it also came the report that the Raja of Banpur had gathered a large body of men at Lalitpur. At the same time it was reported that the Raja of Shahgarh ... was raising soldiers with the intention of making war on the British. Within a few days it appeared that the

whole area, north of Narmada, was up in arms. The Raja of Banpur had seized Lalitpur and had imprisoned all the Europeans. The detachment sent from Sagar for the relief of Lalitpur under Major Gausson could not proceed beyond Malthone, as the passes to the north were all held by large bodies of the Raja's troops. Messages passed between the Raja's men and the sepoys in Major Gausson's detachment, and on 25th June, the latter broke out into open defiance. Meanwhile, the officers and ladies imprisoned by the Raja of Banpur were permitted to go to Sagar, but on their way, they were seized and imprisoned by the Raja of Shahgarh. After keeping the prisoners for nearly three months, they were allowed to go to Sagar where they arrived in a most exhausted condition. It is, however, noteworthy that in none of these places were the Britishers murdered indiscriminately."

- To continue



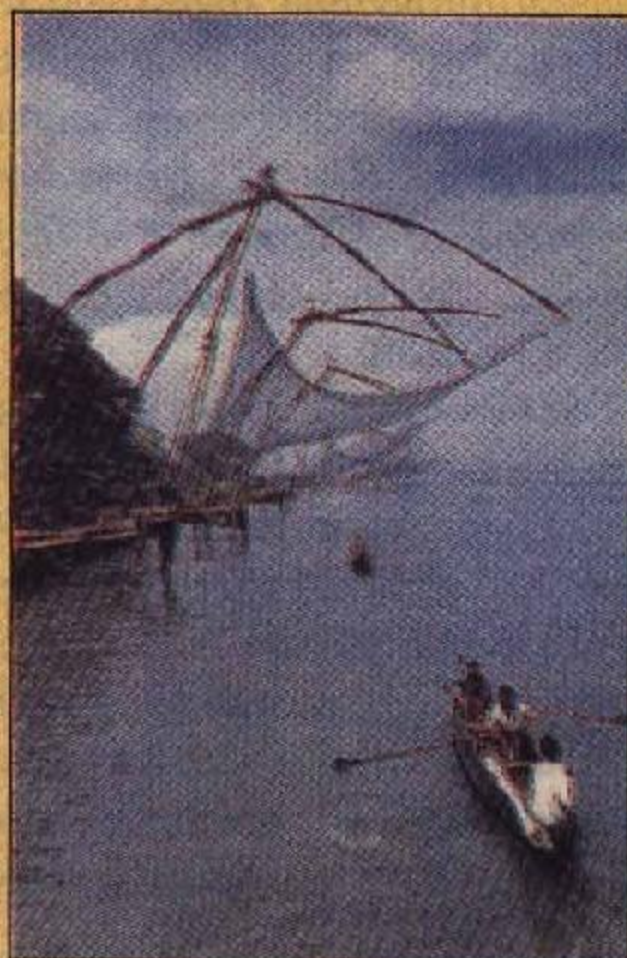


COCHIN-A TOURISTS' PARADISE

Situated in the lush green southern state of Kerala, Cochin boasts of a wealth of historical and cultural diversity and a fascinating past that is in evidence even today. For centuries, spices, tea, and coffee were being exported to various parts of the world from its harbour. It was first occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century and then the Dutch took over. The Dutch Palace at Mattancherry, near the harbour, was actually built by the Portuguese in 1557 and later renovated by the Dutch in 1663.

Cochin is also home to the oldest synagogue in the Commonwealth. Though constructed only in 1568, Jewish immigrants had come to Kerala as early as the 1st century AD as refugees, fleeing Roman persecution in Jerusalem. It is only here that one can come across Chinese fishing nets still being put to use.

Cochin is surrounded by several little islands—many of them linked by a ferry service. One can watch dolphins frolicking on Willingdon Island or enjoying a quiet stroll along the winding paths on Vypeen Island. Although Cochin has its own airport and railway station, a much more pleasant way to get to the city is to take a ferry from Alleppey and sail down the narrow palm shaded canals.



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EKAVIRA

= To the rescue of a damsel in distress =

Long, long ago several kingdoms had flourished on the banks of the sacred river Ganga. One such kingdom was ruled by a handsome and brave prince, Ekavira, belonging to the dynasty of the Hehayas.

One day, while enjoying a stroll in the forest, Ekavira was attracted by a certain sweet smell. He proceeded to locate its origin. Soon he chanced upon a charming lake and was amazed to find in its water a hundred-petalled lotus, extraordinary for its splendour and smell.

But if the lotus delighted him, what he saw next made him anxious. A young lady who stood by the lake was in tears, looking extremely dejected.

Prince Ekavira persuaded her to disclose to him the cause of her sorrow. This was her story: She was Yasovati, the companion of Princess Ekavali, the daughter of King Raibhya of the neighbourhood. As Princess Ekavali loved lotuses more than anything else, her father had created for her several lotus lakes. The princess had an uncanny power to smell lotuses from great distances. The princess and Yasovati had come there attracted by the fragrance of this divine lotus, when a demon named Kalaketu led them forcibly to his citadel and proposed to marry the princess. As the princess spurned his proposal, the demon had her thrown into a dungeon.

Prince Ekavira at once attacked the hidden citadel of the demon and rescued the princess. He then led the two damsels to King Raibhya.

"My boy, I was about to send my ministers to you proposing my daughter's marriage with you. Now I have even greater reason to press the proposal!" the king told the blushing prince.

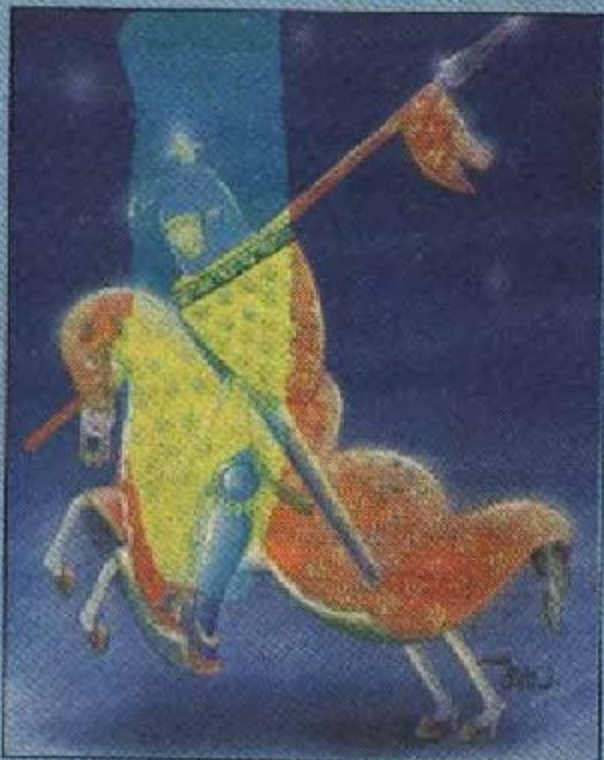
Thus Prince Ekavira married Princess Ekavali.



DO YOU KNOW?

HERALDRY

—Shital



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Medieval knights had patterns on their shields, called 'heraldic devices'. Heraldry is the study of these devices which were often beautiful. However, the purpose they served was more than merely decorative. The knights began to wear devices about AD1140. True heraldic devices were passed on from one generation to the next. Some knights wore devices not merely on their shields but on the crests of their helmets, on their surcoats, and on the drapery of their horses. In the heat of battle, these coats of arms helped knights

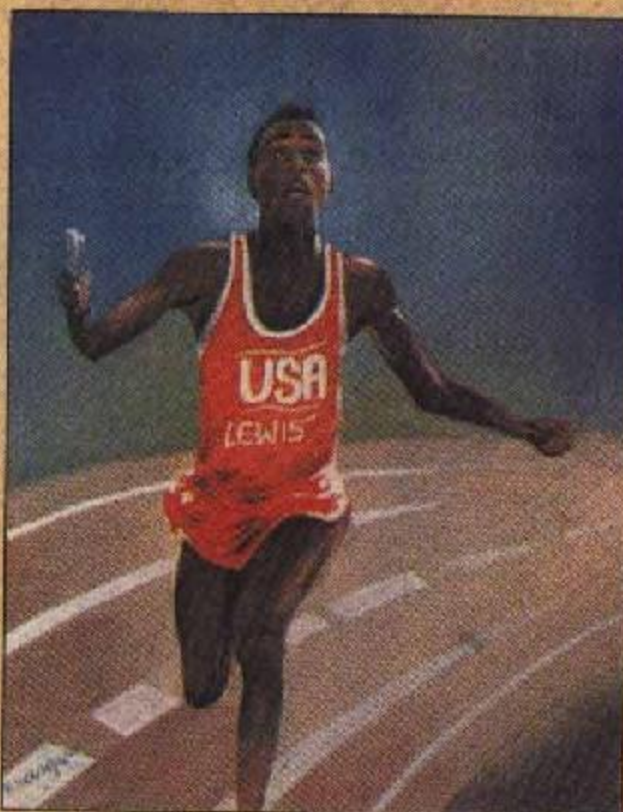
to tell their friends from foes, since there were no uniforms in those days.

RAINBOW

CARL LEWIS

—Shital

Carl Lewis comes from a sporting family. His father is a sports instructor, his mother and sister are international athletes, and his brother was a soccer player. Carl's own career is one of the most successful ever in athletics history. In 1983 he had three wins in the U.S. Championships. He went one better at the 1984 Olympics when he equalled Jesse Owens's record of four gold medals, triumphing in the 100m, 200m, long jump, and 4x100m. He retained his gold medals for 100m and the long jump at the 1988 Olympics. Not only did he have the longest run of long jump victories ever, but he has also been the world's fastest sprinter. He retired from active athletics last August.



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THEY STOOD UP TO THE BRITISH!

4

KERALA VARMA PAZHASSI RAJA

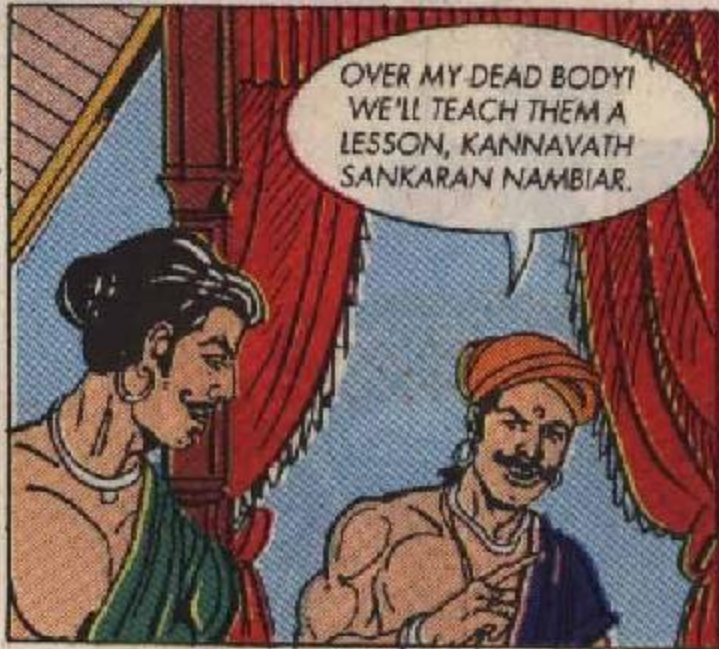
TEXT : MEERA UGRA • ARTIST : GOUTAM SEN

KERALA VARMA, ALSO KNOWN AS PAZHASSI RAJA, WAS A SCION OF THE RULING FAMILY OF KOTTAYAM PRINCIPALITY. IN 1799, ALARMING NEWS REACHED THE CAPITAL, PAZHASSI.

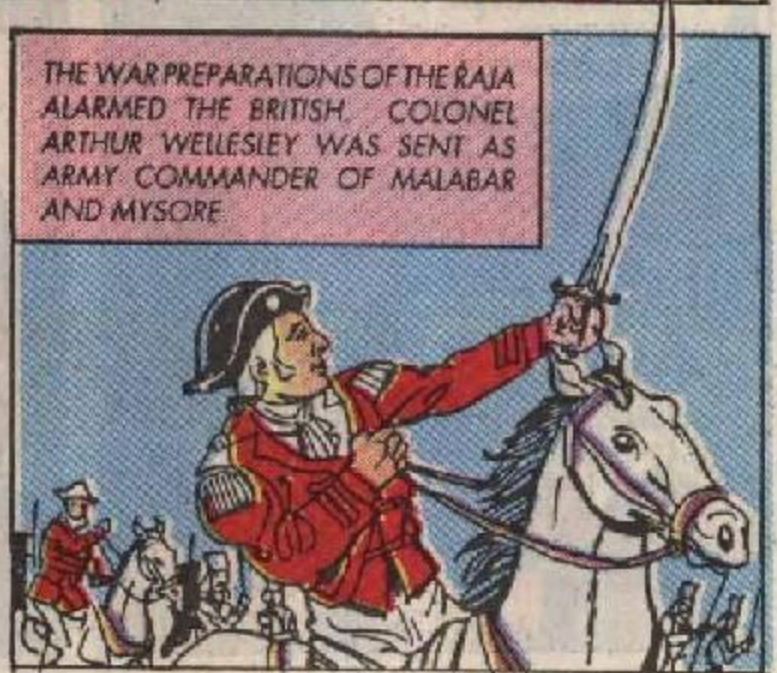
THE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S MEN ARE COLLECTING REVENUE IN WYNAD. THEY CLAIM IT'S THEIRS — AFTER TIPPU SULTAN'S DEATH.



OVER MY DEAD BODY! WE'LL TEACH THEM A LESSON, KANNAVATH SANKARAN NAMBIAR.



THE WAR PREPARATIONS OF THE RAJA ALARMED THE BRITISH. COLONEL ARTHUR WELLESLEY WAS SENT AS ARMY COMMANDER OF MALABAR AND MYSORE.



BUT THE ONSET OF THE MONSOON HAMPERED HIS MOVEMENTS AND THE RAJA'S MEN TOOK NO OPPORTUNITY TO HARASS HIM—

OH NO! RAJA'S MEN! NEITHER THE RAINS NOR THE LEECHES HAMPER THEIR SPIRITS!





IN SEPTEMBER 1800, LT. COL. KIRKPATRICK REPORTED IN HIS DESPATCH —

"THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM FACING US IS THE QUESTION OF RESISTING PAZHASSI RAJA. IF HE'S DEFEATED EVERYTHING WILL BE QUIET... THE RAJA'S POWER IS RISING AT MANATHANA..."



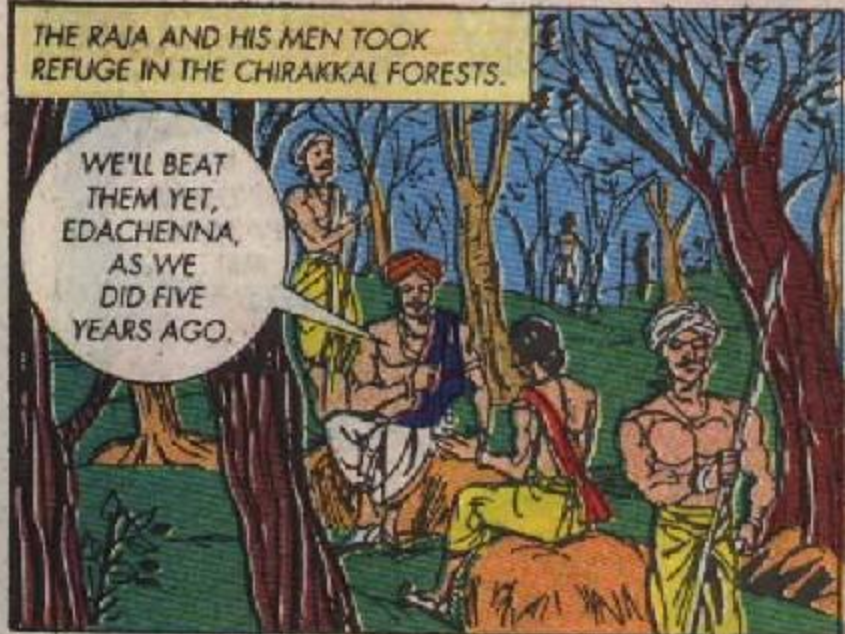
A LARGE ARMY WAS SENT UNDER COLONEL STEVENSON. IN MAY 1801, AT WYNAD FORT.

THEY'VE LAID A SIEGE. WE'LL HAVE TO EVACUATE THE FORT.



THE RAJA AND HIS MEN TOOK REFUGE IN THE CHIRAKKAL FORESTS.

WE'LL BEAT THEM YET, EDACHENNA, AS WE DID FIVE YEARS AGO.



CLASHES BETWEEN THE TWO CONTINUED. A FEW MONTHS LATER SANKARAN NAMBIAR AND HIS YOUNG SON WERE CAUGHT AND HANGED...



TRAINED BY COL. MACLEOD, THE NEW POLICE FORCE, THE KOIKARS, SOON BECOME EXPERT FIGHTERS. PAZHASSI RAJA LOST A FEW BATTLES AND HIS GENERALS WERE CAUGHT OR KILLED. FINALLY, ON NOVEMBER 30, 1805 WHEN THOMAS HARVEY BABER AND CAPTAIN CLAPHAM WERE COMBING THE FOREST TO NAB PAZHASSI RAJA —



THE RAJA TOOK OUT HIS DIAMOND RING AND SWALLOWED IT.



THE NEXT DAY PAZHASSI RAJA WAS CREMATED WITH FULL HONOURS. PAYING A TRIBUTE TO KERALA'S FIRST FREEDOM FIGHTER, BABER WROTE IN HIS REPORT TO HIS SENIORS,

ALTHOUGH A REBEL HE WAS ONE OF THE NATURAL CHEIFTAINS OF THE COUNTRY AND MIGHT BE CONSIDERED ON THAT ACCOUNT RATHER AS A FALLEN ENEMY.



All Because of a Letter



Parvati did not know how to read and write. Nevertheless, she insisted on her son Prasanna marrying an educated girl. Prema went about bragging that while she knew the three R's, her mother-in-law was backward in education. Whenever she got an opportunity, she ridiculed her and sometimes even insulted her. The old lady suffered all that in silence, without remonstrating.

Prasanna was aware of what was going on at home, and he felt sad. He found fault with his wife's attitude and behaviour towards his mother. One day, Parvati received a letter; it was from a distant relation of hers. When the postman came, Prasanna was not present. So, she asked Prema to read it for her.

The contents said that a lady re-

lated to her, who had passed away some time ago had, in her will, left half of her savings amounting to one lakh rupees to Parvati and she could claim the amount only if she learnt to read and write, so that a copy of the will could be shown to her for her perusal.

"What a pity I don't know how to read or write!" the lady regretted.

There was a sudden change in her daughter-in-law. "Mother, you should start learning right from today," she prompted the lady. "Within a few months, you'll be able even to put your signature."

"But where can I learn all that?" Parvati responded, with a heavy sigh. "I can't be attending a school at this age! I now feel ashamed that I never thought of studying in a school."

"Who said you should go and study



in a school, mother?" said Prema. "For one thing, age is not a hindrance to learn anything. At any time one can learn the alphabets, and how to read books. Don't worry, I shall myself teach you how to read and write, I assure you, within six months, you'll be able to put your signature. Remember, you'll get a lakh of rupees, and you cannot lose it at any cost."

When Prasanna came back home, he was surprised to see his mother and wife huddled together with a slate, pencil, and some books. He was duly told about the letter his mother had received. He also put in a word of encouragement to his mother. More than her determination to learn, what amused him was the change that had come over his wife, who was now taking great care of her mother-in-law.

The two would spend some time together in the morning and a few hours later in the evening, one teaching and the other learning. Within six months, the old lady was capable of

reading and writing, and affixing her signature. "We must now go and see the will, Prasanna," she reminded her son. "It's time we claimed the one lakh of rupees."

Prasanna laughed aloud. "There is no money or wealth that we can get or claim, mother! The lakh of rupees came out of my imagination. That was only a ruse to bring the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law together. That letter was written by me and none other!"

Now Parvati and Prema joined Prasanna in the laughter. "Let that one lakh of rupees remain in your imagination, my son," said Parvati. "At least I can now read the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* myself. That's a greater acquisition.

"I shall now start a school for uneducated adults," said Prema. "That'll be social service, and I'll be kept busy."

The happiest among the three was, of course, Prasanna.



FIRST INDIAN WOMAN SPACE TRAVELLER

When Kalpana Chawla was a student at the Tagore Bala Niketan in Karnal, she used to fill her drawing books with sketches of aeroplanes. Small wonder, then, while her parents were keen on her studying for Medicine after high school, she herself preferred Engineering and went on to choose Aeronautics. She was then only 17. Eighteen years later, and after taking her doctorate in her favourite subject, she has become the first Indian woman—first from any Asian country, for that matter—to travel to space. This happened on November 19, when she was one of the 6-member crew to get into the space shuttle *Columbia* on a 15-day adventure. While you hold this copy in your hand and read these lines, she may still be orbiting or preparing to come down after completing a successful mission.

You would like to know more about Kalpana Chawla, won't you? She was born in Karnal, which is a prosperous town in Haryana bordering Delhi-New Delhi. After the birth of two boys and two girls, her parents wished to have one more boy, and Kalpana grew up like a boy, preferring a bobbed hair and wearing jeans and T-shirts. After high school, she joined the Punjab Engineering College, where she became the first girl to choose Aeronautics, much against the advice of the Principal and the teachers.

But she was able to convince them that she had correctly chosen her career when she began standing first in all her subjects right through. She was determined to excel in the discipline she had chosen for herself.

By the time she got her degree, she was raring to go to the U.S.A. for higher studies in Aeronautics. But her parents did not wish that she left the shores of India so soon in life. Kalpana was adamant, and they gave in. In the U.S.A., she began research work for her doctorate. In 1984, she met her would-be husband, Jean Pierre Harrison who was a commercial pilot. With his help, she took her Commercial Pilot's License as well as a Private License and made her maiden solo flight in 1987.

She then set her sight on space. She joined the NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) as a Researcher and soon became Vice-

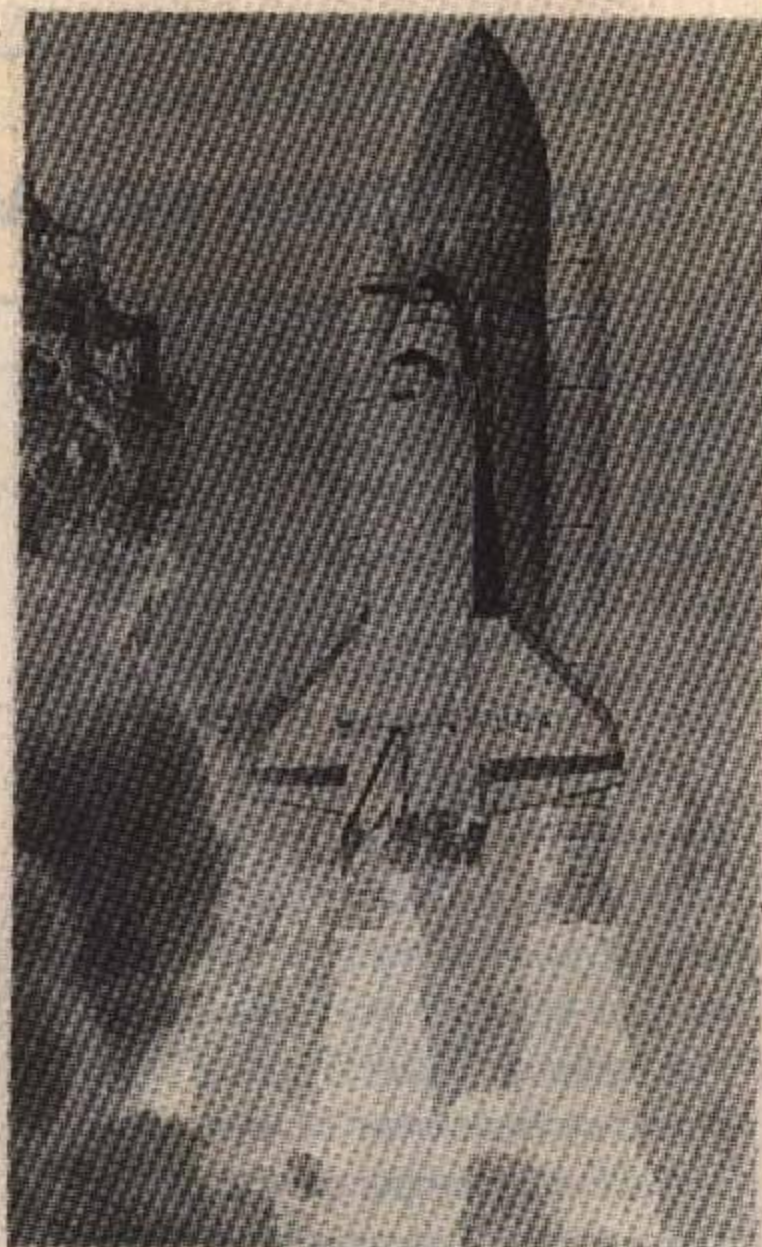


President of a department. An advertisement inviting applications for selection as astronauts caught her attention and she offered her candidature. In the 1992 selection, she was not successful. In 1994, she was advised to send in her papers once again. She withstood the gruelling tests—physical, psychological, and medical. She was one of 19 shortlisted from among nearly 3,000 applicants. In 1996 she was finally selected for training as an astronaut at the Houston Training Centre, where she spent 16 months. By then, NASA was preparing for the 88th flight of *Columbia*, but till the last moment, Kalpana was not sure whether she would ultimately make it. She did, and on November 19, she joined another woman - Takai Doi, who became the first Japanese woman astronaut—three Americans, and one Ukrainian.

After spending more than two hours in their capsule waiting for the countdown, they were hurtled into space where they left the earth's atmosphere in the next 8 minutes to become travellers in space.

Kalpana Chawla, who is a pure vegetarian, and the other crew will have to subsist on liquid food, and do with only a sponge bath—all this to be done in 45 minutes. For 16 hours in a day, they will be kept busy with specific assignments, while they take turns to sleep for the next 8 hours.

Kalpana will be responsible for the scientific experiments the shuttle will



conduct during the 15 day orbit in space. She will also release a free flying satellite to study the sun, while Taka Doi will be one of the two to undertake a spacewalk.

Among the many who will be keenly watching Kalpana's adventure in space is Rakesh Sharma, who became India's first cosmonaut in 1989. Kalpana told an Indian Space delegation just before the launch: "This is a proud moment for India."

By the way, Kalpana is a Black Belt in Karate, an expert swimmer, a Bharata Natyam artiste, and a poet who once wrote about the gypsies of Karnal. And the gypsies, as you know, are a wandering (nomad) tribe!

Life is worth living



Gokul was a small time trader of Gopalpur. When he was twenty, his parents died in an accident. From then on, he felt lonely and lost all interest in life. His friends and relatives advised him to get married.

"Why should I marry when I don't have any interest in life?" he argued with them whenever he was forced to give an answer. Otherwise he preferred to remain silent. "One has to live till death, once he is born. I would prefer to lead a lonely life which, god willing, may not last long," he would add if they still persisted.

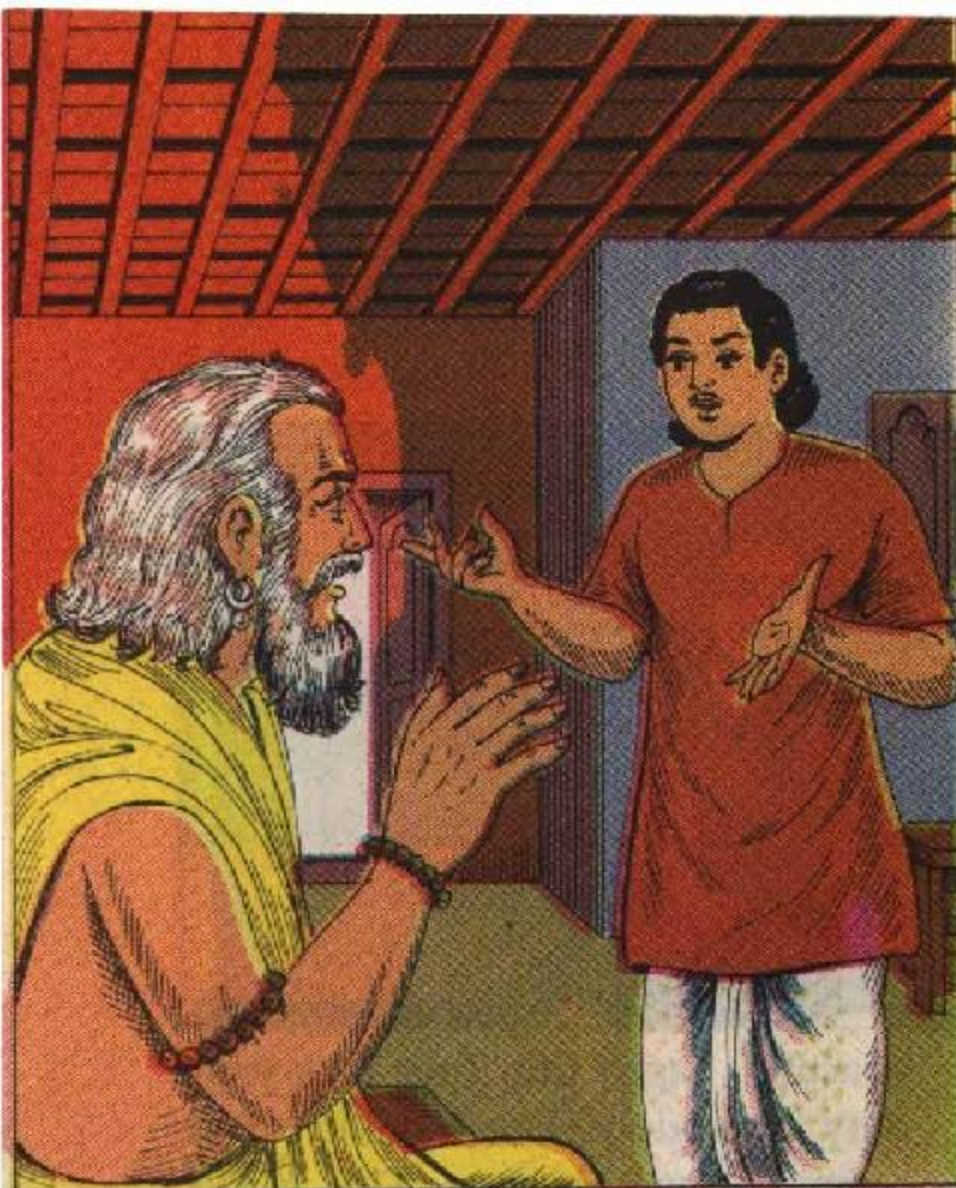
"Whatever is one's fate, one will have to abide by it," some friends would say. "Why should you waste your life and hate living just because your parents are not alive? Better take a wife, bring up a family, and lead a

peaceful, happy life. Take it as your duty to society. Don't think you'll remain young for ever. This is the time you enjoyed life."

"You just remarked that one has to abide by one's fate, didn't you?" retorted Gokul. "You leave me to my fate. If a solitary life has been willed for me, let it be so!"

A stage came when his friends and relatives were frustrated. They then stopped advising him, pleading with him, or persuading him. One day, a *yogi* named Sadanand arrived in Gopalpur. People gathered in large numbers to listen to his discourses or to meet him personally and discuss their problems. Gokul was not keen to meet him, so he did not attend his discourses. Word was taken to Sadanand, and the *yogi* decided to





call on Gokul.

He received the yogi with due reverence. "What's this I hear, my son?" he chided the young man. "People tell me that you're disgusted with life and all that. Your attitude is wrong. This is the time you should lead a happy life. That's what nature says. Don't forget that!"

"If life means only doing some work, eating and sleeping," said Gokul, "O muni, I don't have any fancy for that kind of life!"

"Then, what type of life do you wish to have?" queried the yogi.

"Oh! I must have great wealth," answered Gokul, "my wife should be called a queen, and people should always praise me. That, I will say, is

life!"

"Mind you, if you lead a happy life, then you'll be like a king," observed Sadanand, "your wife will be treated like a queen, and people will find it difficult to assess your wealth, and naturally they'll praise you."

"I'm afraid I can't accept the stand you advise me to take," said Gokul regretfully. "Several of my people had given me similar advice and I had rejected all of them. However, if you have any practical suggestions for me, I'm willing to listen to you."

"All right, you may marry, if at all you decide to marry, a girl of your choice," said yogi Sadanand. "She'll be happy with you and feel like a queen. However, you may not change your attitude and continue to be disgusted with life!"

"Can that happen, sire?" Gokul could not suppress his curiosity.

"Whatever I say will come true, my son," said Sadanand. "You need not have any doubt. A lot of changes will happen, but you'll never change. My blessings and good wishes to you, my son!" Sadanand took leave of Gokul and went away.

The young man was now ready to believe every word of the yogi. Before long, he married Gayatri, who was both intelligent and clever. She took exceptional care of her husband and attended to his needs even without his reminding her. A year passed and a son was born to them. Gokul was

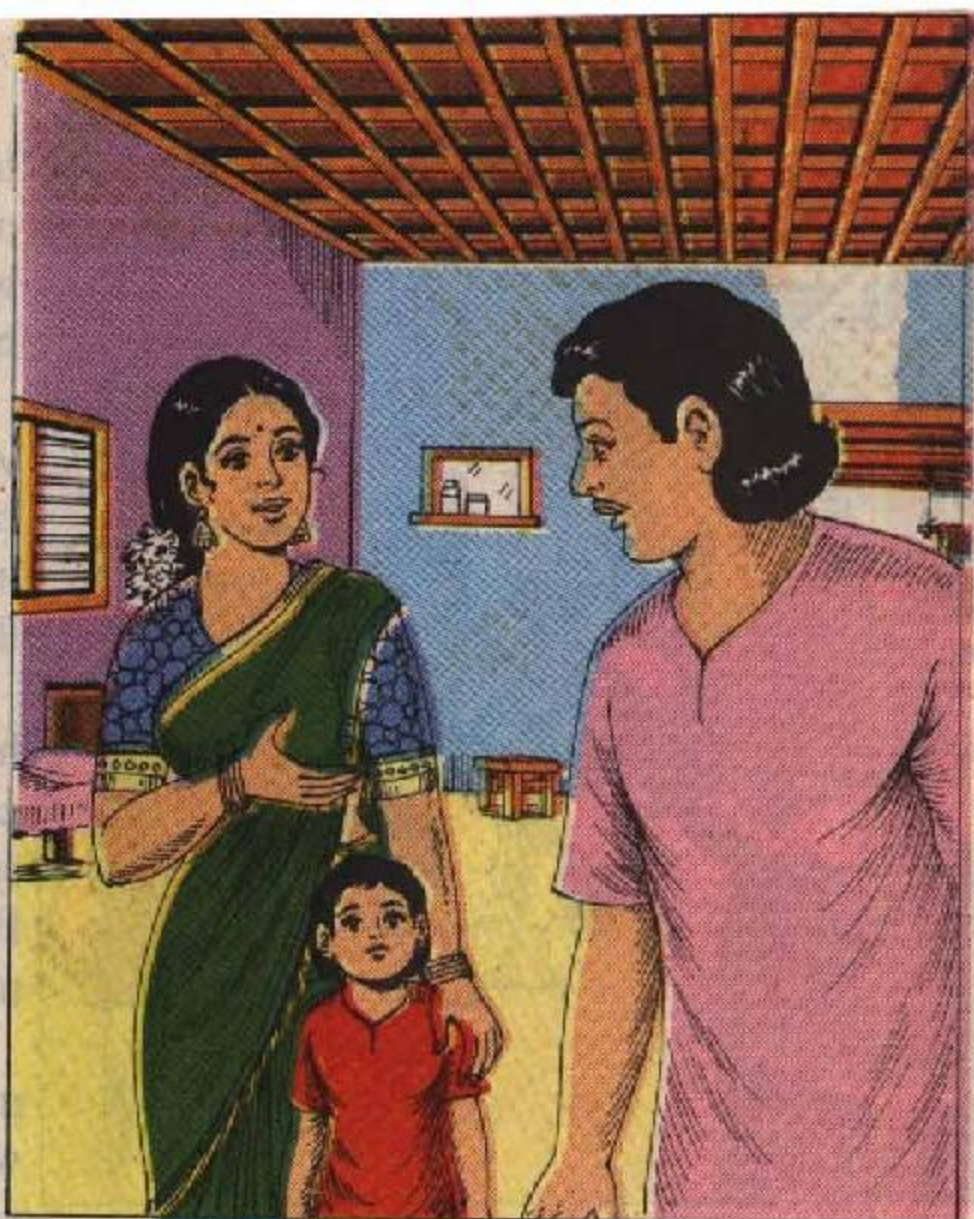


extremely happy and treated his son as a godsent treasure.

He continued to look after his business, without giving it any special attention despite the changes at home. He did not earn any extra profit, and whatever he earned was just sufficient to meet the requirements at home. However, Gayatri managed home in such a way that the family never felt that there was anything wanting. She did not bother her husband for new saris or for jewellery. Whenever Gokul prompted her to save and increase their wealth, so that she could live like a queen, she merely said: "We have enough wealth for our food, and fortunately, all three of us keep good health and we don't have to meet any extra expenditure. Do we need anything more than that?" Presumably, she was happy and contented.

When she found that she had time to spare, Gayatri started learning music. Gokul found her singing not only melodious but divine. At his instance, she participated in a contest for musicians in the kingdom. Gayatri adjudged the best. She was conferred with a title, 'Sangeeta Rani'.

About that time, it was found that Gopalpur was rich in diamond deposits. Many people converged on the small town and bought houses at fancy prices and started mining for and trading in diamonds. The residents of Gopalpur were enticed by the fancy

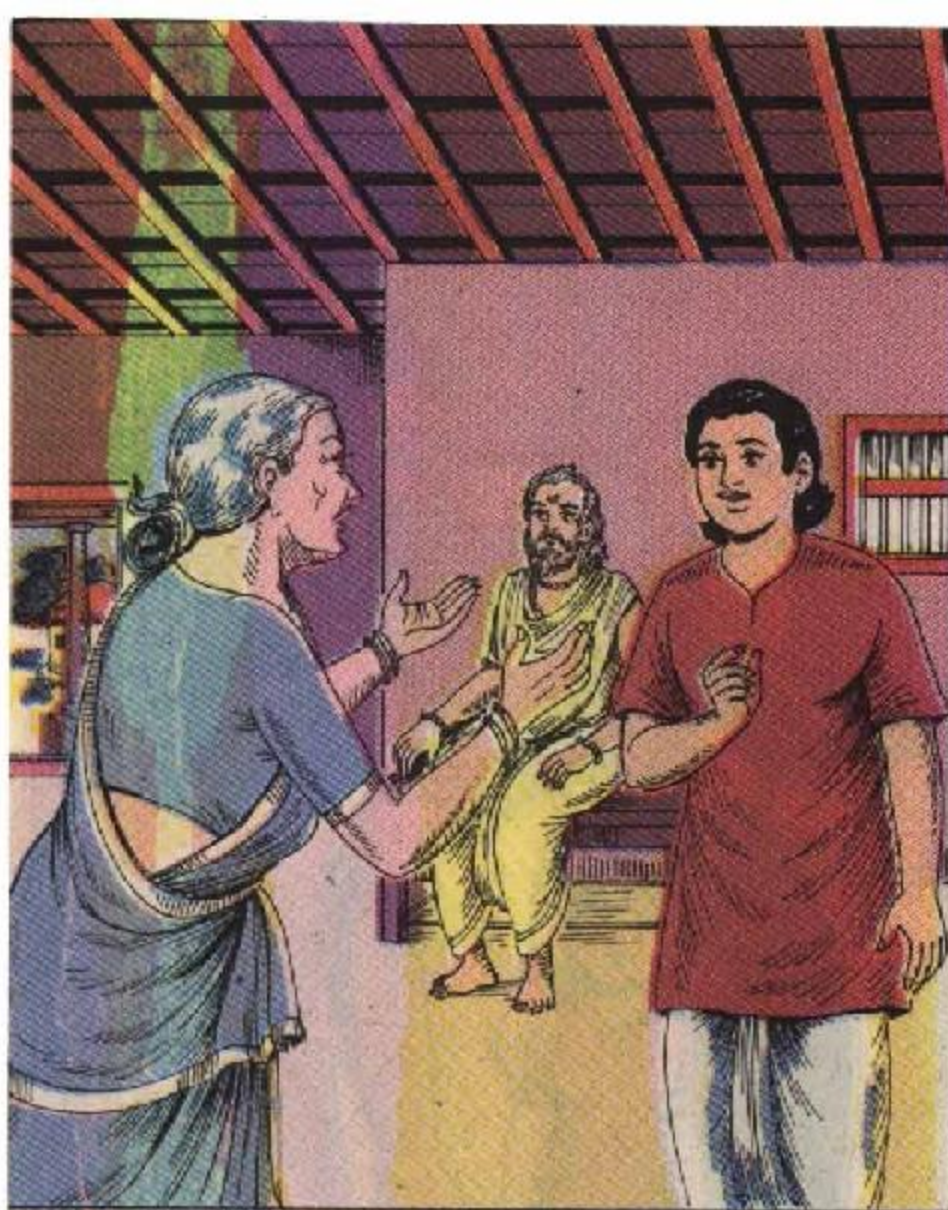


prices offered for their houses. They sold them and went away to other towns. However, Gokul was not willing to sell his house, nor was he ready to move out of Gopalpur. He continued to live there and carry on with his trade.

Most of the diamond merchants pulled down the old houses and built modern fashionable-looking houses. Amidst these buildings, Gokul's old modest house looked unimpressive, but he did not mind it. Some of the rich traders had their foibles, while Gokul remained exemplary in his behaviour and character.

Though he led a quiet and contented life, sometimes Gokul was given to wondering whether he was





not a poor man among the rich traders. "What that yogi predicted has not come true. It's four years since he came and left, and I haven't added to my wealth, my wife has not become a queen, nor am I the recipient of anybody's respect or praise!" he ruminated.

One day, Sadanand came to Gopalpur once again. He called on Gokul, who was at that time playing with his little son. "You appear to be very happy, my son!" remarked the yogi. "A lot of changes seem to have come over you after your marriage."

Gokul extended all courtesies to the yogi and made him comfortable. "O swami! I don't hate life any longer. That much of your forecast has come

true. But nothing more. For instance, my wealth has not increased, my wife is not yet a queen, and people don't have any special regard for me!"

"On the contrary," said Sadanand, with a smile, "all that I had predicted has come true, my son! And no change has come over you, and you remain the same old Gokul."

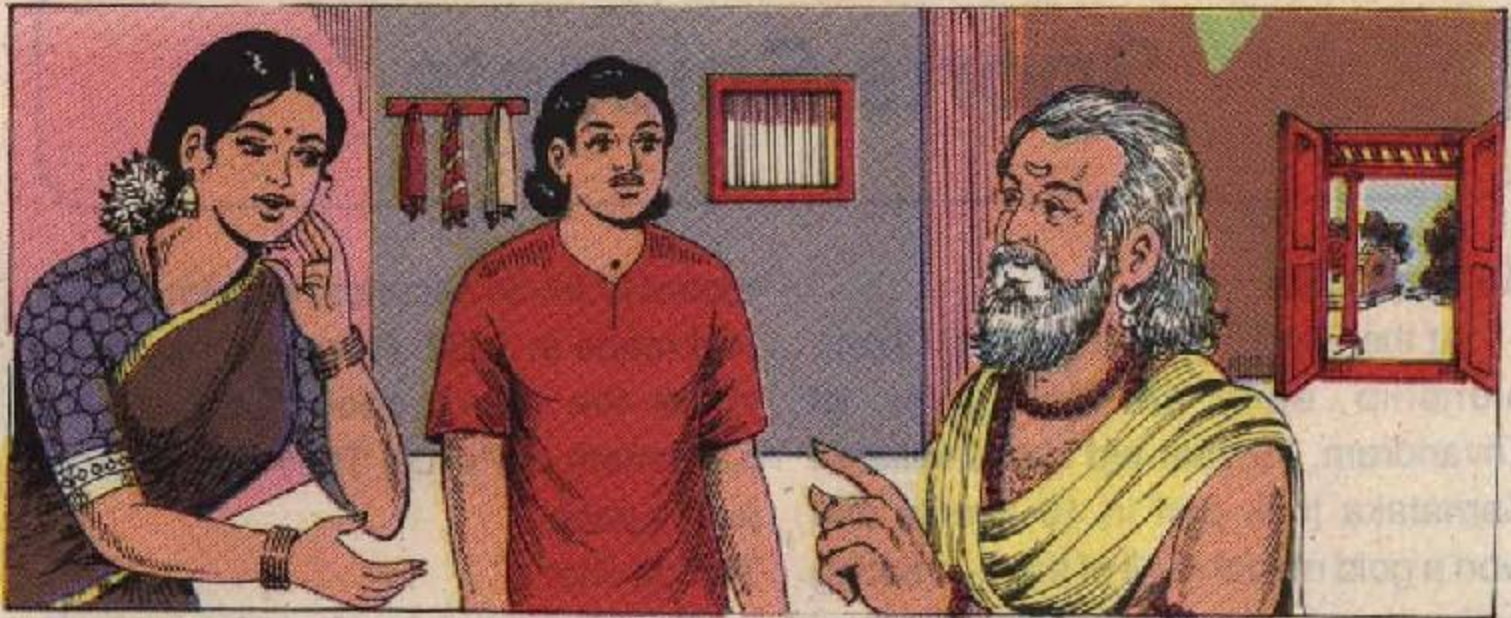
Gokul, of course, was surprised to hear that from Sadanand. "You're correct about your remark about me, sire," he said. "I haven't changed a bit. But I'm yet to see your other blessings materialising."

Just then, his neighbour's old mother came into Gokul's house and wailed: "Parents of a son like you would have done *tapas* for several years." She then added, pointing at Gokul: "Your parents must have been very fortunate in getting a son like you. Look at mine! He's a diamond merchant, but his heart does not glitter. He does not care for me; why, he won't even let me read the *Ramayana* in the morning. May I sit here for sometime and read?"

"Yes, Amma, please make yourself comfortable," said Gokul.

After she had gone inside, Sadanand said: "See that! She is not the lone person who is praising you, Gokul. Many of your neighbours speak very high of you."

"I didn't know that, swami!" said Gokul humbly. "They are all very rich people, and I had kept aloof from



them. I had no knowledge of what they thought of me."

By then, Gayatri brought a cup of milk for the yogi.

"I'm told you won prizes for music. What did you get?"

"Oh! I was conferred with a title 'Sangeeta Rani'," she said very modestly.

"I told you, Gokul, that she'll become a Rani (queen). So, that prediction has also come true!"

Gokul could not but agree. "But, my wealth has not increased!" he pointed out. He hinted at his disappointment.

It's true that you didn't sell your house to the diamond traders," said Sadanand. "But just think, how much you would have got if only you had accepted the offers for its purchase!

They were willing to pay fancy prices. You didn't know the worth of your property!"

"Maybe they would have paid me a lakh of rupees for the house, though its real worth would be only one-fourth of that price," said Gokul.

"Now you realise that my predictions didn't go astray," observed the yogi. "You could only find that you continued to feel frustrated. Now that you've got everything, just as I had forecast, try to lead a happy and contented life. And don't nourish any desire for more, because there can't be any end to desires. Real intelligence is to control desires."

"You've really shown me what life is, swami!" said Gokul, falling at the feet of Sadanand. "I'm indebted to you forever!"

- Every white hath its black, and every sweet its sour
- Gentle in manner, but resolute in action
- God helps them who helps themselves

Sports Snippets

All Ten Golds

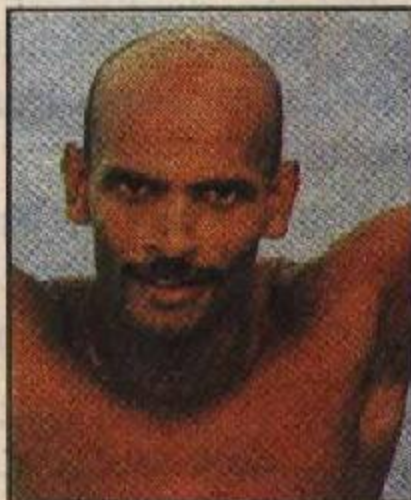
At the 52nd National Aquatic Championship early in November at Trivandrum, 15-year-old Nisha Millet of Karnataka took part in 10 events and won a gold medal in all of them, creating national records in three events, the third record coming in the last event—50m freestyle. This 10th standard student of



the Sophia High School, Bangalore, earned the epithet 'fastest sprinter'. With 49 points, she was crowned the women's champion.

When she arrived in Trivandrum, she was entertaining hopes of creating at least five or six

records, although she is not disappointed in the three she has against her name. She has now set her sights on the Asian Games

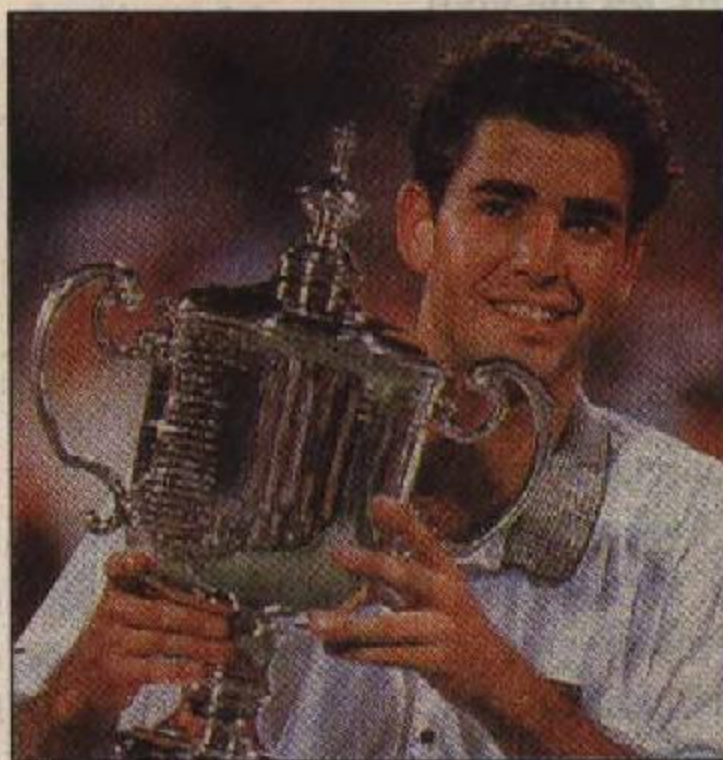


to be held next year. Incidentally, at Trivandrum, Sebastian Xavier of Railways retained his record as the fastest sprinter among men. He still holds the National

record (0.23.34 seconds) for 50m that he had made in 1992. However, he had to share the men's championship with Kailasnath of Police. They both had 26 points each.

Tennis Star

Pete Sampras has been named the best tennis player of the last 25 years. The honour came to him at the 25th



anniversary celebrations of ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) in November, at Hanover, Germany, where he beat Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia in the final of the ATP World Championship. It was the 52nd crown for the 26-year-old U.S. player in his tennis career. The choice was made by a 100-member panel, which included famous tennis players, sports journalists, and directors

of ATP. Sampras led by 779 points, while legendary Bjorn Borg got only 754 points. The 'naughty boy' of tennis, John McEnroe was placed third with 721 points. Those who followed them were Jimmy Connors (634), Ivan Lendl (493), Boris Becker (446), Stefan Edberg (372), Rod Laver (360), Mats Wilander (209), and Ilie Stancu (185). Pete Sampras is also credited with holding the first rank for five years at a stretch. This unique record had earlier been held by only Jimmy Connors.

Fit for Football Again

When he was 20, Nwando Kanu, the famous Nigerian footballer, was labelled a heart patient. Doctors had even warned him against playing which, they said,



might prove fatal. He then went for a surgery to set right the damaged valve, as a last resort. The surgery took place a year ago, and Kanu was later declared fit for football. He played a few matches during this year's season, and is now ready for the December 4 match at the Marseilles Stadium in France to play for the World Eleven against the European Eleven prior to deciding the fixtures for the World Cup in 1998. Rising 6ft 5 inches in height, Kanu reached heights in foot-

ball during the Atlanta Olympics in 1996. It was his brilliant goals that made Nigeria the Olympic Champions. Football fans the world over were thrilled as they watched him on the TV. Then came the shocking news of his heart condition. They will now keenly await to see the 'return of Kanu'.

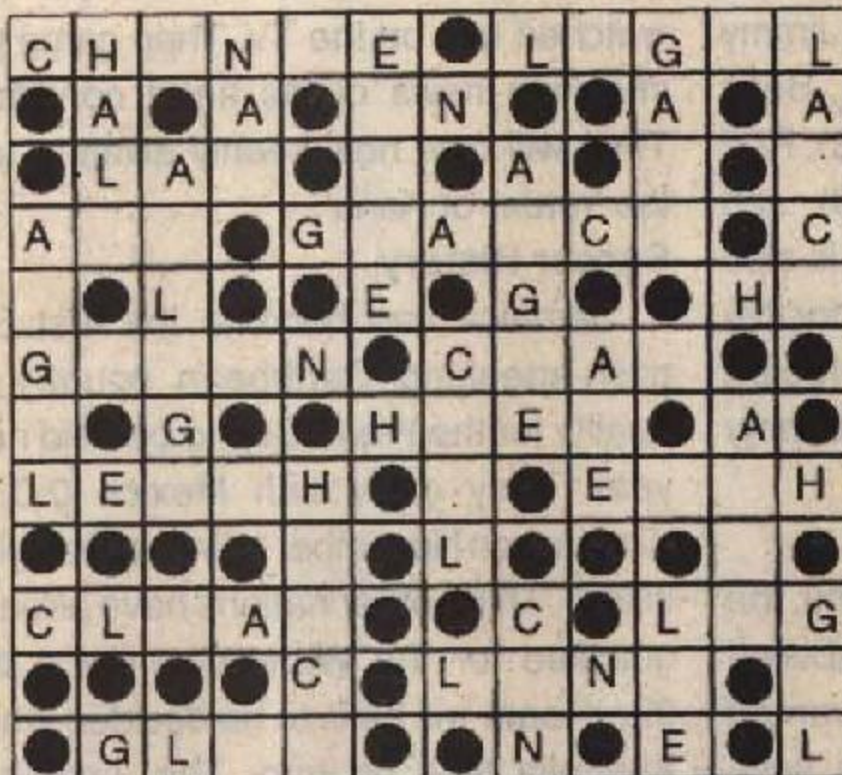
Soccer History

Jamaica has become the first English-speaking Caribbean country to qualify for the World Cup to be held next year. They drew with Mexico 0-0 at Kingston on November 16 in the qualifying match. Thirty other nations have already qualified for the World Cup. Who the 32nd team will be is to be decided when Australia take on Iran. The Jamaican Government celebrated the country's victory by declaring a national holiday the next day!

Best Opening Stand

A new cricket record was created on October 11 in Nairobi where Kenya played against Bangladesh in the opening match of the President's Cup. The opening partnership of Kennedy Otieno and Deepak Chudasama yielded 225 runs for Kenya who registered a 150-run win. The two Kenyans were playing their first one-day international outside the World Cup. The previous best was 212 runs made by Graham Marsh and David Boon of Australia against India in the 1986-87 series. Otieno went on to score 144, while Chudasama was caught after he had made 122. The Kenyans piled up 347 runs for the loss of 3 wickets in 50 overs.

Find 31 words from the single word
'CHALLENGE'



Clues

2 letter words - 2

3 letter words - 8

4 letter words - 9

5 letter words - 9

6 letter words - 3

Total words - 31

Solution



CROSS WORD



W E L L



Using the picture clues make
connecting words.

For the sake of his Country



Long ago, there was a famous architect, Viswaroopa. He designed several temples, *mandapams*, and buildings. His fame spread all over the earth, also the Devaloka as well as the nether world. Word went round that the palace of Nagaraja, the serpent king, in Nagaloka, had developed cracks and fissures. The king thought that he should have a new palace. He sent out messengers to all parts of the earth in search of the best architect.

Some of them reached Viswaroopa. They told him of their mission, and he agreed to design and build a new palace for Nagaraja, and went along with them to Nagaloka. He was taken to Nagaraja and they both spent a lot of time discussing the details of the design and the material to be used

for the palace. Soon they became fast friends. The king saw to it that his stay was comfortable and all his needs were being met.

Viswaroopa started work on designing the palace. However, he could not concentrate in his work. He was worried about his old mother and wife back home.

One day, he told Nagaraja: "I don't have any news of my people, and I'm worried. Could you send someone to the earth and find out what's happening in my place?"

"I'm fully aware of what's happening there," said Nagaraja. "There has been no rain, and there's drought and famine. The villages around your place are also affected."

"If that be the case, I would like you to invoke your powers and en-





sure that there is rain."

"That may not be possible, my friend," replied Nagaraja. "I shall not do anything like that, because the place is fated to suffer famine. I don't think anything can be done for another hundred days, and I would request you not to press me in this matter."

Viswaroopa's eyes welled up with sorrow. His mother, wife, and other relations would be suffering from hunger and thirst.

He once again pleaded with the serpent king. "Please be kind to me, my people, and my country. It doesn't look nice if they all suffer, while I live here in all comfort and peace. You place yourself in my position. How

would you have felt?"

"All your pleadings and arguments are unnecessary," said Nagaraja sternly. "I told you, your country was fated to face drought and famine. How, then, can I save it?"

"If that be so, I would better go back to earth, visit my people, enquire about their welfare, and come back. After that, I shall re-start my work on your palace."

Nagaraja was furious. He called his soldiers and asked them to take Viswaroopa away and put him in prison.

"Don't think you can threaten me like that, O King!" protested Viswaroopa. "Unless and until you order rain to fall in my country, I refuse to do your work!"

"I'm again reminding you that the decision not to allow rainfall in your country had been taken much earlier, and nothing can be done at this late stage now," said Nagaraja angrily.

"I shall then not complete the work on the palace!" said Viswaroopa and he threw away the implements he was working with at that time.

"Is that so?" thundered Nagaraja. "Behead him!" he shouted to the soldiers.

But, suddenly, he himself stood in their way, because he realised that if the architect were to be killed, then his palace would remain unfinished.

The soldiers moved away. Soon, Nagaraja too went away.



Viswaroopa heaved a sigh of relief. But he was unable to leave Nagaloka to go back to earth and meet his people. Suddenly an idea struck him.

He went and began to saw one of the pillars on which the roof of the palace rested. Soon, the whole palace or whatever had been constructed started shaking.

Nagaraja was horrified. He ran to where Viswaroopa was sawing the huge pillar. "Hey! What're you doing?" he shouted at him. "Stop it!"

"I shall not stop unless you promise that rain will fall over my country!" said the architect. "Otherwise, I shall see that the palace comes down in pieces!"

Nagaraja had other no option than to agreeing to his request for rainfall.

"All right, I shall ensure that your country gets rainfall."

"The moment I know that there has been rainfall, I shall construct this palace, which would become the envy of even Lord Indra!" said Viswaroopa.

Nagaraja adorned the architect with a gorgeous shawl and said: "You may go to the earth and visit your country and then come back."

Viswaroopa then started for the earth where, on arrival, he found that his country had plenty of rain and the people had prospered.

Strangely, they did not recognise him, because what they saw before them was a serpent and not the famous architect of their place. "What a huge snake!" they remarked. "But one thing is certain. It brought rains for us!" They decided to build a



home for the serpent. Soon, there was no trace of any famine in that country.

When Viswaroopā returned to Nagaloka, he complained to the king: "Why did you send me in the shape of a snake? I was unable to talk to my mother, or my wife, or my people!"

"You were adamant to go to the earth, weren't you?"

Nagaraj retorted. "That was why I changed your form to that of a snake, so that you would come back here. Now get busy with your work and finish the palace soon."

Viswaroopā also kept his promise. The palace was a glittering place. Nagaraja arranged for a celebration at the time of his moving into his palace. Lord Indra was among the invitees. He was dumbstruck by the beauty of the building. Nagaraja was mightily pleased. He rewarded Viswaroopā with a lot of gifts. He

then sent him back to the earth.

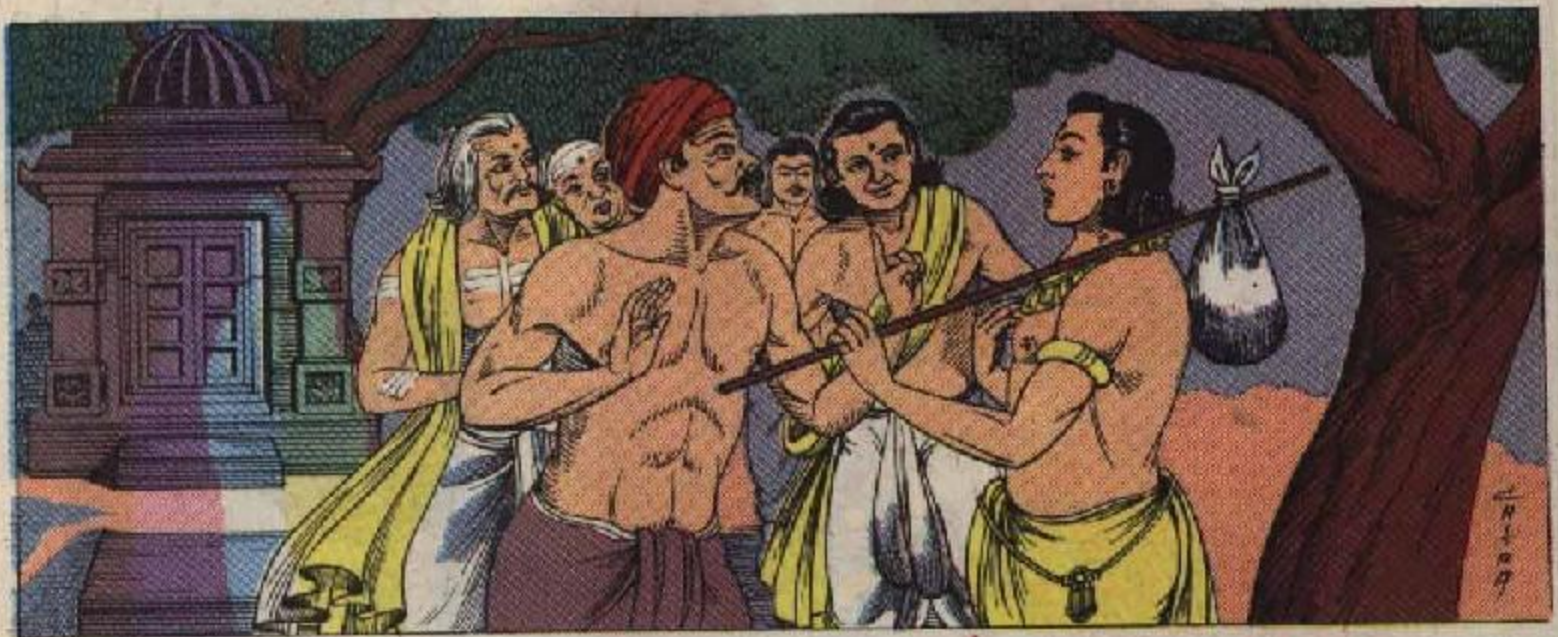
When the people saw him, they asked Viswaroopā, "Where were you all these days? When you were away, we had a great famine because of drought. Then, suddenly a huge serpent made its appearance almost at the same time we had plenty of rainfall. We constructed an abode for that serpent."

"Oh! That snake was none other than me!" said Viswaroopā.

But the people did not believe him.

"The messengers of Nagaraja, the king of Nagaloka, came to me and asked me to build a palace for him. I agreed and went with them. I had started work when I heard about the drought and famine. So I persuaded Nagaraja to see that there was rainfall here. And he sent me here in the form of a serpent."

The people were all praise for Viswaroopā.





Which bird flies backwards ?

-Suryanarayana Murthy, Vijayawada

There is one species of birds that can—if they so wish—fly backwards. They are the bee humming birds commonly seen in Cuba. In fact, they are the world's smallest bird—only 55 mm long from beak to tail. It weighs just about 1.5 grams or so. They are so named because of the speed with which they beat their wings, making a humming sound. The speed enables them to hover like a helicopter or even fly backwards.

The English alphabet has twenty six letters. Which language has the maximum number of letters ?

-Balwant Singh, Ludhiana

The Cambodian language has seventy-two letters, while the Rotokas language spoken in Bougainville Island, in the South Pacific, has only eleven letters ! Most of the Indian languages have some fifty to sixty letters. The Russian alphabet has only forty-one letters.

What is the difference between seals and sealions ?

-Vasanta Mehta, Baroda

Seals which are Commonly found in the Artic Circle, have short necks. They do not have ears which are visible externally. Sealions have prominent ears which distinguish them from seals. The seal's hind legs are activially part of its tail, which do not enable them to walk on land, while the sealion can walk.

Which city is known as 'Venice of the East' ?

-Bharati Vidyarthi, Patna

Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, situated on the banks of river Maenam, is crisscrossed by several canals which have earned it the epithet 'Venice of the East'. These canals are invariably crowded by people on small boats called 'sampans', which are used for carrying fruits, flowers, and vegetables. Incidentally, the country was known as Siam till 1948.

How far can one see ?

-Thanickachalam, Kodaikanal

If one were to stand on level ground, one can see up to a stretch of three miles. However, if one climbs to a height of, say, 20ft, one can see up to six miles. On top of a 300ft. hill, one can even see a stretch of nearly 20 miles. From inside an aeroplane, one's sight extends to anything like 160 miles.

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



MAHANTESH C. MORABAD



MAHANTESH C. MORABAD

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